

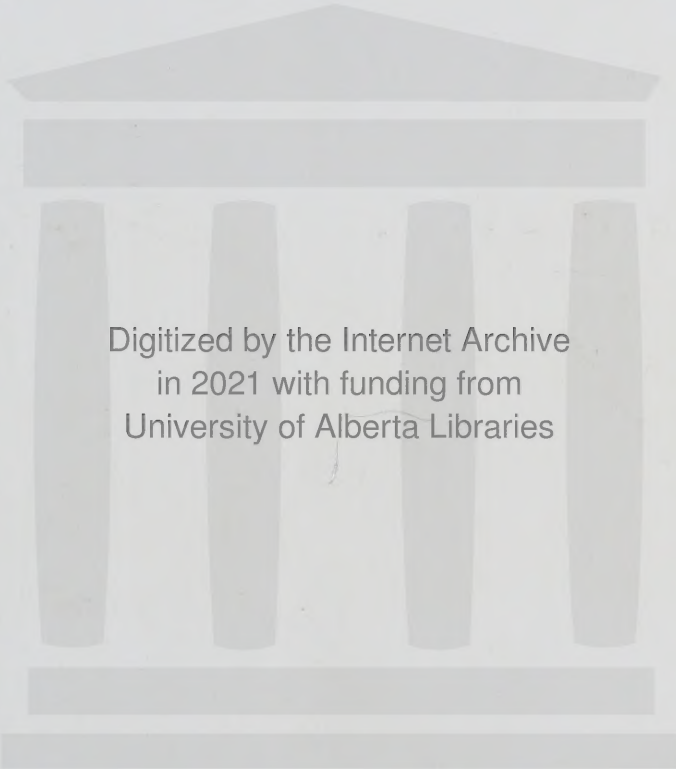
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H. HANS
ANDERSEN'S
FAIRY
TALES

=

ANDERSEN

1864

CHILDREN'S CLASSICS.



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The swans alighted quite close to her.

(The Wild Swans.)



HANS ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

Translated from the Danish
by W. ANGELDORFF

Edited, with an Introduction,
by WALTER JERROLD

Illustrated by FRANK C. PAPÉ





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THE WILD SWANS.



Elsa.

FAR away, in the land to which the swallows fly in the winter, there lived a King, who had eleven sons, and one daughter, Elsa. The eleven brothers—they were royal princes—went to school, each with a star on his breast, and a sword by his side; they wrote on golden slates with diamond pencils; and they could learn by heart as well as they could read; one could see at a glance that they were princes. Their sister Elsa sat on a little stool made of plate-

glass, and had a picture-book that cost as much as half a kingdom.

Yes, these children were indeed fortunate; but their happiness was not to last for ever.

Their father, who was King over the whole of the

country, married a wicked Queen, who did not love the poor children. This they discovered on the very first day. There was a grand festival at the palace, and the children were playing at receiving company; but although they usually had all kinds of pastry and roasted apples, the Queen gave them only sand in a tea-cup, and told them to suppose that it was something nice.

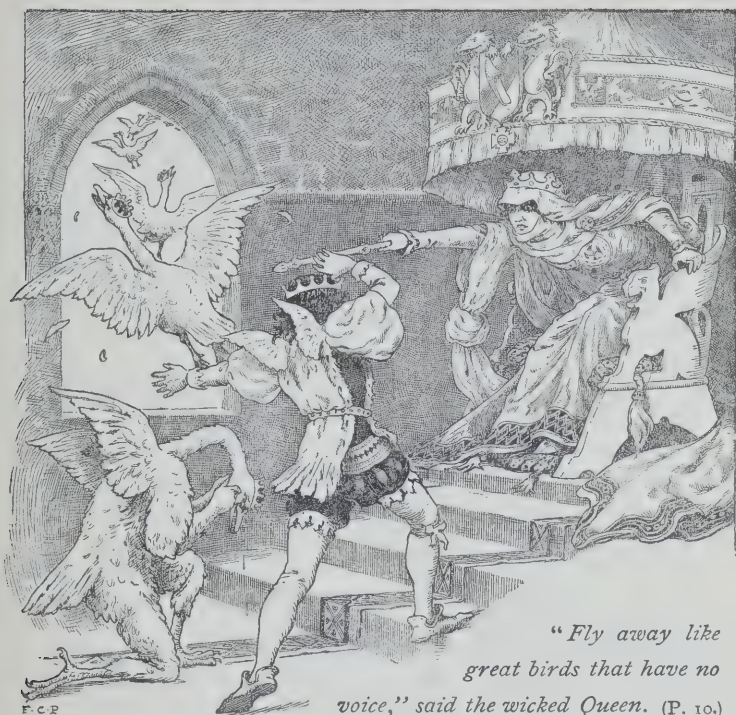
The next week she sent little Elsa away to live with a peasant and his wife; and it was not long before she told the King so many untrue things about the princes that he no longer cared anything about them.

"Go out into the world and look after yourselves," said the wicked Queen. "Fly away like great birds that have no voice."

But she could not make them as ugly as she would have liked; so they were transformed into eleven beautiful white swans. With a strange cry, they flew out of the windows of the palace, far away over the park and the forest.

It was still early in the morning when they passed the place where their sister Elsa was sleeping in a peasant's cottage. They hovered over the roof, craned their long necks, and flapped their wings, but nobody heard or saw them; so they had again to fly high up in the sky, and far away out into the wide world. They flew onwards to a great dark forest, that stretched down to the seashore.

Poor little Elsa stood in the peasant's cottage, and played with a green leaf, for she had no toys. She made a hole in the leaf, and looked through it at the sun. It



*"Fly away like
great birds that have no
voice," said the wicked Queen. (P. 10.)*

seemed to her as if she saw her brothers' bright eyes; and every time the sunbeams shone on her cheeks she thought of all the kisses they had given her.

One day passed away just like another. As the wind rustled through the rose-bushes outside the house, it whispered to the roses: "Who could be more beautiful than you?" But the roses shook their heads, and said, "Elsa." When the old woman was sitting on a Sunday in the doorway reading her hymn-book, the wind would turn the leaves and say to the book: "Who can be more pious than you?" and the hymn-book would answer, "Elsa."

And what the roses and the hymn-book said was really true.

When she was fifteen years old, Elsa returned home. The Queen saw how beautiful her little step-daughter had become, and her heart was filled with envy and hatred. She would have liked to turn her into a wild swan, like her brothers; but she did not dare to do that, just then, because the King wished to see his daughter.

Early in the morning the Queen went into her bath-room, which was built of marble, and prettily furnished with soft cushions and the most beautiful carpets. Then she took three toads, kissed them, and said to one of them—

“When Elsa comes to the bath, seat yourself upon her head that she may become as stupid as you.”

And to the second she said: “Seat yourself on her forehead, so that she may be as ugly as you, and her father may not know her.”

To the third she whispered: “Lie on her heart, and give her an evil temper, that may bring misfortune upon her.”

So she placed the toads in the clear water, which at once turned green, summoned Elsa, undressed her, and bade her enter the bath. As she dipped her head under the water, one of the toads seated itself on her head, another on her forehead, and the third on her bosom; but Elsa did not seem to notice them; and as soon as she rose out of the water, three red poppies were floating on the surface. If the toads had not been venomous, and kissed by the witch Queen, they would have been changed into red roses;

but they became flowers all the same for they had rested on her head and on her heart, and she was too pious and innocent to be hurt by the power of witchcraft.

The wicked Queen, seeing this, washed the poor girl with walnut-juice, until she was quite brown, smeared some evil-smelling ointment over her pretty face, and tangled her beautiful hair until it was impossible to recognise the pretty Elsa. When her father saw her he was quite shocked, and declared she could not be his daughter. None but the watch-dogs knew her, and they were only poor creatures, who could say nothing.

Poor little Elsa wept and thought of her eleven brothers who were all far away. Full of sorrow, she stole away from the palace, and wandered the whole day long over the fields and moors till she came to the great forest. She did not know whither she was going, but she felt very unhappy, and longed so much for her brothers, who, like herself, had been driven out into the world, that she felt she must try to find them.

She had not been long in the forest when the night fell, and she lost the path. So she lay down on the soft moss, said her evening prayer, and leaned her head against the stump of a tree. It was very still, the air was mild, and all around, in the grass, and on the moss, hundreds of glow-worms were shining like green fires. When she touched a branch with her hand, the brilliant insects fell down upon her like a shower of shooting-stars.

The whole night long she dreamed of her brothers; they were playing again as children, writing with diamond

pencils on their golden slates, and looking at the beautiful picture-book that had cost half a kingdom. But on the slate they did not scribble as before, for they wrote now of the brave deeds they had done, and of all that they had lived to see. And in the picture-book everything was living. The birds sang, and the people walked out of the book, and spoke to Elsa and her brothers; but when she turned the leaf, they ran back again, each to his own place, so that they might remain in their proper order.

When she awoke, the sun was high in the heavens, although she could not see it, owing to the dense foliage of the lofty trees; but the sunbeams played through the leaves like a glittering golden veil. The air was sweetly scented by the green foliage, and the birds almost perched themselves on Elsa's shoulders.

She heard the ripple of water flowing from many springs into a pool with the most beautiful sandy bed. It was surrounded by thick bushes, except in one place, where the deer had made a large opening. And here Elsa went down to the water, which was so clear that if the wind had not touched the branches and the bushes, so as to make them move, she might have thought that they were painted on the bed of the pool, so distinctly were all the leaves reflected, both those through which the sun was shining, and those that lay entirely in the shadow.

When, however, she saw the reflection of her own face, she was quite frightened: it was so brown and ugly. But she wetted her little hand, and rubbed her eyes and forehead, and the white skin again shone through.

Now she took off her clothes and stepped into the fresh water; and a more beautiful little princess than she could not be found in all the world.

When she had dressed herself and plaited her long hair, she went to the rippling spring, drank out of the hollow of her hand, and went deeper into the wood, without knowing whither she was going. She thought of her brothers, and of the good God, who surely would not abandon her. He it was Who made the wild apple-tree, to give food to the hungry; He Who led her to such a tree, its branches hanging heavy with fruit.

Here she had her midday meal; she put props under the branches, and then continued her journey, right into the darkest part of the wood. It was so still that she could hear the sound of her own footsteps, the rustle of every little withered leaf as it was crushed under her feet. Not a bird was to be seen; not a sunbeam could pierce its way through the thick foliage; the lofty trees stood close together, and as she looked around her it seemed as if a trellis-work of branches enclosed her on every side. This was a solitude such as she had never felt before.

The night grew very dark; not a single little glow-worm sparkled from the moss. Sadly she laid herself down to sleep, and it seemed to her that the branches above were parted, and that the Christ Jesus with His mild eyes was looking down upon her, while little angels peeped through over His head and under His arms.

When she awoke in the morning she did not know whether she had dreamed this, or whether it had really

happened. She had only walked a few steps on her way, when she met an old woman with a basket full of berries, and she gave Elsa a few of these to eat. Elsa asked her whether she had seen eleven princes riding through the forest.

"No," replied the old woman, "but yesterday I saw eleven swans, with golden crowns on their heads, swimming down the stream close by," and she led Elsa a little farther away to a slope at the bottom of which a rivulet was flowing. The trees on the banks stretched their long leafy branches across the stream; and where they had grown up some distance apart, they had gradually torn the roots from the ground, until they could bend over the water, and twine their branches together.

Elsa bade the old woman farewell, and followed the banks until she came to the place where the stream flowed out into the open sea. A glorious expanse of sea lay spread before the maiden's eyes, but not a sail appeared, not a boat was to be seen; how was she to go farther?

She noticed how all the countless pebbles on the beach were rounded by the action of the water: glass, iron, stone, everything that lay scattered there had been shaped by the water, which was far softer than even her delicate hands.

"The water rolls on without tiring, making smooth what is rough; and so will I: I too will be unwearied in my task. I thank you for your lesson, you clear rolling waves; my heart tells me that you will one day carry me to my dear brothers."

On the seaweed that was thrown up by the waves lay eleven white swans' feathers; these she gathered into a bunch. Drops of water were sprinkled over them, but whether they were dew-drops or tears, no one could tell.

Elsa did not feel so lonely by the shore, for there were constant changes in the sea, more in the course of a few hours than a lake would show during a whole year. When a heavy black cloud appeared, the sea seemed to say: "I can look black and heavy too;" and the wind blew, and the waves were flecked with white foam. But when the reflection of the sun gave a red tint to the sky, and the wind had gone to rest, the sea looked like the leaf of a rose. Now it became green, now white, but although it was so still and quiet, there was always a gentle movement on the beach—the water rose and fell as softly as the breast of a sleeping child.

At sunset Elsa saw eleven white swans, with golden crowns on their heads, flying towards the land. They flew one behind the other, looking like a long white ribbon in the sky. Elsa crept up to the slope and hid behind a bush; and the swans alighted quite close to her, flapping their great white wings. Then the sun sank into the water, and in a moment the plumage of the swans had fallen off and eleven handsome princes—Elsa's brothers—stood before her!

She uttered a loud cry, for, although they were much changed, she knew them—she felt that it must be they. So she ran into their arms, calling them by name; and they were all very happy when they saw and recognised their

little sister, who was now a tall, beautiful girl. They laughed and cried; and soon they understood how wicked their step-mother had been to them all.

"We fly about," said the eldest of the brothers, "in the shape of wild swans as long as the sun is in the sky; but as soon as it sets we recover our human form. We are bound, however, to find a resting-place before sunset, for at that moment if we were flying high up in the sky, we should fall as human beings down into the depths of the sea. We do not live here; a land just as beautiful as this lies beyond the sea; but the distance across is very great and there is not a single island on the way where we can rest for the night. Only a lonely little rock rises above the water. It is so small that we have just room to lie there side by side, and when the sea runs high the waves dash over us; yet we thank God for it. There we pass the night in our human form, and without this resting-place, we should never again be able to visit our beloved native land, for it takes us two of the longest days in the year to fly across. But once a year we are permitted to return to our home, where we may stay just eleven days; then we fly over the great forest, from which we can see the castle where we were born, and where our father lives, and see, too, the tall spire of the church where our mother lies buried. Here even the trees and bushes seem familiar to us; the wild horses gallop over the plains just as we saw them in our childhood; the wood-cutter sings the same old songs to which we danced as children. This is our native land, to this we feel drawn, and here we have found you, dear little sister. We may

stay here two more days, and then we must fly back to a land, as beautiful perhaps, but not our own. How can we take you with us? We have neither ship nor boat!"

"How shall I be able to save you?" asked their sister; they slept very little, but talked together nearly the whole of the night.

Elsa was awakened by the sound of the swans' wings as they soared above her; the brothers were again transformed, and flew in wide circles until at last they were far away. But one, the youngest of all, stayed behind, and laid his swan's head in her lap, while she stroked his white wings. The whole day they remained together. Towards evening the others came back, and when the sun set they stood in their natural shape.

"To-morrow we must fly away, and may not return for a whole year, but we cannot leave you here alone. Have you courage to come with us? My arm is strong enough to carry you through the forest; why should not all our wings be strong enough to fly with you over the sea?"

"Yes; take me with you!" said Elsa.

They spent the night in making a couch with the bark of the pliant willow and with tough reeds. It was large and strong; Elsa lay down upon it, and when the sun rose, and the brothers were transformed into wild swans, they took hold of the couch with their beaks, and flew high up into the sky with their dear little sister, who was still asleep. As the sunbeams shone on her face, one of the swans flew over her head to shade her with his broad wings.

They were far from the coast, and when Elsa awoke she thought she was still dreaming. It seemed to her so wonderful to be carried through the air, high up over the sea. By her side lay a branch with delicious ripe berries and a bunch of sweet roots. The youngest of the brothers had gathered them for her, and now she thanked him with a smile, for she knew it was he who was flying over her head and shading her with his wings.

They were so high up that the first ship they saw beneath them looked like a white gull floating on the water. A great cloud rising behind them appeared like a lofty mountain, and upon it Elsa saw her own shadow and those of the eleven swans, looking gigantic in size as they flew past. It was a scene of more grandeur than anything she had ever beheld; but as the sun rose higher, and the cloud was left behind, the floating shadows disappeared.

Onward they flew, the whole day long, like an arrow whizzing through the air, but slower perhaps than usual, for now they had their sister to carry.

Stormy weather came on as the evening drew near; full of despair, Elsa saw the sun sink, and the lonely little rock in the sea was not yet in sight. It seemed to her that the swans moved their wings more and more rapidly. Ah! it was owing to her that they did not advance more quickly; and when the sun set they would become human, fall into the sea, and be drowned! She prayed to God from the depths of her heart; but the rock was nowhere to be seen.

The black clouds came nearer, and the freshening

breeze announced a storm. The clouds shot forward in a leaden, threatening mass, and the lightning burst forth, flash after flash. Now the sun was nearly on the horizon, and Elsa's heart was trembling. Suddenly the swans darted forward so swiftly that she thought she would fall, but still they sailed onward. The sun was half way down in the water when at last she saw the little rock beneath her, but it seemed no larger than a seal with its head above the surface.

So swiftly did the sun sink that before her feet touched the ground it seemed scarcely larger than a star, and then it was suddenly extinguished, like the last spark in a piece of burnt paper.

The brothers were standing round her, arm-in-arm, but there was no room to spare—just enough for them all. The waves dashed against the rocks and covered them with spray. The sky was lit up as by one continuous flash of lightning; one peal of thunder followed the other in quick succession; but sister and brothers held each other by the hand, and sang hymns, which gave them faith and courage.

At dawn the air was pure and calm, and as soon as the sun rose the swans flew away with Elsa from the rock. The sea was still rough, and it looked to them from their great height as if the white foam on the dark green ocean were millions of swans floating over the waves.

As the sun rose higher, Elsa saw before her, floating in the air, a range of mountains, their tops covered with shining masses of ice. In the middle of these was a palace a mile long, with rows of magnificent pillars one above the

other. Down below, the lofty crowns of the palm-trees waved above gorgeous flowers as large as mill-wheels. She asked whether this was the country to which they were flying; but the swans shook their heads, for what she saw was the beautiful, ever-changing, aerial palace of Fata Morgana and into this palace no human being might enter. Elsa was gazing at the sea, when, suddenly, mountains, forests and palaces vanished; and now there stood twenty stately churches, all like one another, with tall steeples and pointed windows. She seemed to hear the organ playing; but it was only the murmur of the sea. As the churches drew nearer, they were transformed into a fleet sailing beneath her. She looked down, and the fleet was merely the sea mist drifting over the water.

It was an ever-changing scene that was spread before her eyes; until at last she saw the country to which they were bound—beautiful blue mountains covered with cedar forests, villages, and palaces. Long before the sun went down she was sitting on a cliff before a huge cavern overgrown with trailing green creepers, like embroidered tapestry.

“Now we shall see what you will dream of to-night,” said the youngest of the brothers, as he showed her the beautiful apartment in which she was to sleep.

“If only I could dream how to save you!” she said, and this thought was so constantly in her mind, and so fervent was her prayer to God for help, that even in her slumber she continued to pray.

It seemed to her that she flew high up in the air to Fata Morgana's aerial palace, and that the fairy came to

meet her, beautiful and radiant, but nevertheless very much like the old woman who had given her the berries in the forest, and told her about the swans with the golden crowns.

"Your brothers can be saved," she said; "but have you courage and perseverance? Though the sea is softer than your delicate hands, it can mould the hardest rocks, but it feels no pain as your fingers do; it has no heart, and cannot suffer such anguish and agony as you will have to endure. Do you see this stinging-nettle that I hold in my hand? Many nettles of this kind may be found around the cave in which you sleep; these only, and the kind that grow upon churchyard graves, are of any use—remember that! These you must gather, although they will burn your hands with blisters. Crush them with your feet: they will become a kind of flax, and from this you must spin and knit eleven shirts with long sleeves; throw these over the eleven wild swans, and the spell will be broken.

"But remember that from the moment you undertake this task, until it is finished, even if it should take a whole year, you must not speak. The first word that you utter will go like a deadly dagger through your brothers' hearts; upon your tongue hang their lives. Remember all this!"

Elsa touched the stinging-nettle with her hand. It burnt like fire, and she awoke.

It was broad daylight, and close by her, where she had been sleeping, lay a stinging-nettle, like the one she had seen in her dream. She then fell on her knees and thanked the Lord, and went out through the entrance of the cave, to begin her work. With her delicate hands she

plucked the dreadful nettles, although they stung like fire. They burned great blisters on her hands and arms, but she gladly suffered this to save her dear brothers.

Each nettle she crushed with her bare feet, and began to spin the green fibres.

When the sun set, the brothers arrived, and were sorely frightened to find her quite dumb. They thought it was a new spell cast upon her by the wicked stepmother, but when they saw her hands, they understood what she was doing for their sake. The youngest brother wept, and where his tears fell she felt no pain, and the burning blisters vanished.

The whole night through she continued her work, for she could not rest until she had saved her dear brothers. During the whole of the following day, while the swans were away, she sat in solitude, but never had the hours gone so quickly. One shirt was already finished; now she began the next.

Then she heard the sound of huntsmen's horns among the mountains.

She trembled with fear; the sound came nearer, and she heard the barking of the hounds. Then she fled in terror into the cave, gathered together the nettles which she had plucked, and sat down upon the bundle.

Suddenly a great hound came bounding from a thicket, and soon afterwards another, and yet another. They barked loudly, ran back, and came again.

Before many minutes all the huntsmen stood outside the cave; the handsomest amongst them was the King of

the country. He advanced towards Elsa; never before had he seen a more beautiful maiden.

"How did you come here, my pretty child?" said he.

Elsa shook her head, for she dared not speak—it would cost her brothers their lives; and she hid her hands under her apron, so that the King should not see how greatly she was suffering.

"Come with me," said he: "you must not stay here. If you are as good as you are beautiful, I will clothe you in silk and velvet, place a golden crown on your head, and you shall live in my most magnificent palace!" and he lifted her upon his horse.

She wept and wrung her hands, but the King said:

"My only wish is to make you happy; one day you will thank me for this."

And he rode away among the mountains, holding her in front of him on his horse, while the huntsmen followed.

At sunset, they saw in front of them a magnificent city with churches and cupolas, and the King led Elsa into his palace, where great fountains were playing in the lofty marble halls, and where the walls and ceilings were covered with rich paintings. But she had eyes for none of this grandeur; she could only weep and mourn. Passively she allowed the women to array her in costly robes, plait her hair with precious pearls, and cover her blistered fingers with dainty gloves.

As she stood there in all her splendour, she was so dazzlingly beautiful that the whole Court bowed before her, and the King declared that he would make her his bride.

But the Archbishop shook his head, and whispered that the beautiful maiden from the wood was surely a witch, who had blinded their eyes and ensnared the King's heart.

The King would not listen to this. He ordered music to be played, and the most costly dishes to be served: beautiful girls danced before Elsa, and she was led through the centre of the gardens into magnificent halls: but not a smile played over her lips, or gleamed in her eyes; sorrow stood there as an eternal heritage.

The King now opened a little chamber close by, where she was to sleep. It was hung with costly green tapestry and closely resembled the cave in which she had lived. On the floor lay the bundle of fibre which she had prepared from the nettles, and on the wall hung the shirt which was already finished. One of the huntsmen had thought these things very curious and brought them with him.

"Here you may dream that you are back in your former home," said the King. "Here is the work with which you occupied yourself; now in the midst of all your splendour, it may please you to think of that time."

When Elsa saw these things that lay so near her heart, a smile played upon her lips, and the blood rushed to her cheeks; she thought of her brothers' deliverance, and kissed the King's hand. He pressed her to his heart, and commanded that all the church bells should announce the wedding festival. The beautiful dumb maiden of the wood was to be the Queen of the land!

Then the Archbishop whispered bitter words in the King's ear, but they did not sink into his heart. The wedding

was to take place, and the Archbishop himself had to place the crown on Elsa's head. In his wicked spite he pressed the narrow circlet so firmly upon her forehead that it hurt her: but a heavier weight lay upon her heart—her sorrow for her brothers.

She could not feel any bodily pain, her mouth was dumb, for a single word would cost her brothers their lives; but in her eyes one could read how deep was her love for the kind, handsome King who had done everything to make her happy.

Day by day she grew to love him more; oh! how she longed to confide in him and tell him her grief; but no: she must remain dumb—in silence she must fulfil her task.

At night, therefore, she crept away from him and went into the little chamber that had been arranged like the cave, and here she wove one shirt after another.

But when she began on the seventh, she had no more flax left. She knew that the nettles which she could use were growing in the churchyard, but she had to gather them herself and how was she to get there?

"Alas, what is the pain in my fingers when compared with the anguish of my heart?" she thought. "I must make the attempt; surely Heaven will not deny me help."

With a trembling heart, as if she were about to commit an evil act, she stole down, one moonlight night, into the garden, and passed through the long avenues and lonely streets to the churchyard.

Here, sitting around one of the largest tombstones, she

saw a group of ugly creatures, hideous witches, who took off their rags as if they were going to bathe, and, digging with their long skinny fingers into a freshly made grave, pulled out the corpses and devoured their flesh.

Elsa had to pass close by them, and they fixed their wicked eyes upon her; but she murmured a prayer, gathered the stinging-nettles, and carried them back to the palace.

One person only had seen her, the Archbishop, for he watched while others slept.

Now he felt sure that he was right in his distrust of the Queen: she was a witch, and had therefore enchanted the King, together with the whole of the people.

In the confessional he told the King what he had seen and what he feared, and as the hard words fell from his lips, the carven images of the Saints shook their heads as if they wished to say, "It is not so: Elsa is innocent."

But the Archbishop interpreted it otherwise, thinking that they too were bearing witness against her—that they were shaking their heads at the thought of her sin.

Two great tears rolled down the King's cheeks, and he went home with doubt in his heart. At night he pretended to sleep, but sleep was far from his eyes, and he noticed how Elsa rose from her bed.

Every night this was repeated, and on each occasion he followed her softly, and saw her disappear into the little room.

Day by day his look became darker. Elsa noticed the change; she did not understand the reason, but it alarmed her, and what anguish of heart did she not

suffer for her brothers! Her salt tears rolled down on the royal velvet and purple, and lay there like glittering diamonds.

All who saw her splendour wished that they, too, were Queens. She was by this time nearly at the end of her task; only one shirt was still unfinished, but she had no more fibre, and not a single nettle.

Once more, for the last time, she had to go down to the churchyard and gather a few handfuls. She thought with terror of the solitary walk and of the hideous creatures who were there: but her will was as firm as her trust in Providence.

Elsa went: but the King and the Archbishop followed her. They saw her disappear through the wicket-gate of the churchyard, and when they came nearer they caught sight of the hideous creatures sitting on the tombstones, just as Elsa had seen them; and the King turned away, for he thought that she, too, was one of them—she whose head had that very evening rested on his breast.

“Let the people judge her!” he said; and the people condemned her to be burnt at the stake.

From the magnificent royal palace she was taken to a dark and damp cell, in which the wind whistled through the grated windows. Instead of velvet and silks they gave her the bundle of nettles which she had gathered—on this she could lay her head. The coarse burning shirts which she had knitted, they gave her as mattress and coverlet; but they could have left her nothing of greater value in her eyes, and with a prayer to Heaven, she again began her task.

Outside, the street-boys sang jeering songs about her, and not a soul comforted her with a friendly word.

Towards evening a swan fluttered against the bars of the window. It was her youngest brother, who had found his sister, and she sobbed aloud for joy, although she knew that the next night would perhaps be her last; but her work was very nearly finished, and her brothers were near.

The Archbishop came to stay with her during the last few hours; this he had promised the King. But she shook her head, and entreated him by looks and gestures to leave her, for this night she had to finish her work, or all would be in vain—her pain, her tears, and her sleepless nights. The Archbishop left her with bitter reproaches; but poor Elsa knew that she was innocent, and continued her work.

The little mice ran about the floor, dragging the nettles to her feet, so as to help her a little: and the thrush sat outside the grating of the window the whole night long, singing his sweetest song to give her courage.

The day was just breaking, it wanted yet an hour of sunrise, when the eleven brothers came to the gates of the palace and asked to be brought before the King. They were told that this was impossible, for it was still night; the King was asleep, and must not be disturbed. They prayed, they threatened, the guard came up, and the King himself at last came out and asked what was the matter.

But at that very moment the sun rose, and the brothers were no longer to be seen; but away over the palace flew eleven wild swans.

The people were streaming out through the gates of the town to see the witch burned.

A wretched horse drew the cart on which she sat: they had dressed her in a garment of coarse sackcloth, and her lovely, long hair hung loose around her pretty head. Her cheeks were deadly pale, and her lips moved silently, whilst her fingers were weaving the green fibres, for even on her way to death she would not give up her work.

Ten shirts lay at her feet, the eleventh she was still knitting. The mob jeered at her—

“Look at the witch, how she mutters! She has no hymn-book in her hands; no—there she sits with her hateful witchery. Tear it from her! tear it into a thousand pieces!”

And they surged around her, and tried to tear the shirts into fragments; but eleven white swans came flying into their midst, settled upon the cart, and flapped with their great wings, so that the mob gave way in terror.

“That is a sign from Heaven—she is surely innocent,” whispered many, but they dared not say so aloud.

Then the executioner seized her by the hand—instantly she threw the eleven shirts over the swans, and there stood eleven handsome princes: but the youngest had a swan’s wing instead of an arm, for she had not quite finished his shirt.

“Now I may speak,” she said; “I am innocent!”

And the people, who saw what had happened, bowed before her as before a saint, but she sank lifeless into her brothers’ arms, for the suspense, anguish, and grief had overcome her.

"Yes, innocent she is," said the eldest brother, and then he told the whole story.

While he spoke, the air was filled with fragrance as from a million roses, for every piece of wood in the pile had taken root and sent forth branches. There stood a fragrant hedge, tall and dense, covered with red roses: and at the top was a single rose, dazzlingly white, and shining like a star: this the King plucked and placed on Elsa's bosom, and she awoke, with peace and happiness in her heart.

And all the church bells began to ring of their own accord, and the birds came in great flocks, and a wedding procession returned to the palace such as no King had ever seen before.

THE BOTTLE NECK.



The bottle fell amongst the rushes.

(P. 37.)

IN a narrow crooked street, between a number of humble dwellings, stood a high house that had given way at all the joints and corners. Poor people lived there, and the deepest poverty reigned in the attic, outside the little window of which an old battered bird-cage was hanging in the sunshine. It had not even a proper water-glass, but only a bottle-neck turned upside down, with a cork in the bottom, and filled with water.

An old maid was standing at the open window; she had arranged some chickweed prettily on the

cage, and a linnet was hopping from perch to perch, singing merrily.

"It is all very well for you to sing," said the bottle-neck. Of course it did not actually say this as we should have said it, for a bottle-neck cannot speak, but it thought it to itself, as we sometimes do. "It is all very well for you to sing, for you have all your limbs; but you should feel what it is to have lost your body, and to have only your neck and mouth left, and a cork in it; you wouldn't sing then. It's well, however, that someone is happy. I have no reason to sing, nor can I sing now, although I could once, when I was a whole bottle, and they rubbed me with a cork. I used to be called a perfect lark—a beautiful lark. How well I remember being out in the forest with the furrier's family when their daughter was betrothed. I remember it as if it were only yesterday. I have seen a great deal in my time, when I come to think of it. I have been in fire and water, down in the earth, and higher up in the atmosphere than most people, and now I am hanging outside a birdcage in the air and the sunshine. I should think it would be worth while to hear my story, but I am not going to tell it aloud, because I can't;" and so it told its story, or rather thought it to itself, and very interesting it was.

The little bird sang its song merrily, and down in the street the people were running and driving to and fro; everybody was thinking of his own business, or not thinking at all, but the bottle-neck *did* think.

It thought of the blazing furnace, and the factory

where it was blown into life. It still remembered how very hot it felt when it was taken out from the roaring furnace—the place of its birth—and how it longed to run back again; but by-and-by, as it was getting cool, it began to feel quite comfortable where it was. It stood in a row, among a whole regiment of brothers and sisters, all from the same furnace. Some of them were blown into champagne-bottles, others into beer-bottles, and that makes all the difference. Out in the world a beer-bottle may contain the most costly *Lachrymæ Christi*, and a champagne-bottle may be filled with blacking, but what you are born to can be seen on the label—nobility is still nobility, even with blacking inside.

All the bottles were soon packed, and our bottle as well. It little thought that it would end its days as a bottle-neck serving as a water-glass in a birdcage; but even this is an honest existence, for, after all, you are of some use.

It again saw daylight when it was packed up with its fellow bottles in a wine-merchant's cellar. Here it was rinsed for the first time, and this was a very curious feeling.

It lay empty and without a cork, feeling very queer; it wanted something, but did not know what. Then it was filled with a good rich wine, corked, and sealed, and had a label stuck on outside, marked: "First Quality." It felt just as if it had passed its first examination. The wine was good, and so was the bottle. When one is young one is full of song. There was a ringing and a singing within it of things it did not know—of the green sunny hills where the wine grows, and where the boys and girls sing merrily

and kiss one another. Oh, how beautiful is life! Of all these things there was a ringing and a singing in the bottle just as there is in the brain of a young poet, who very often does not know the meaning of it.

One fine morning the bottle was sold. The furrier's boy was told to bring a bottle "of the very best," and so it was packed in a hamper with ham, cheese, and sausages together with the most delicious butter and the finest bread. The furrier's daughter packed it herself. She was young and pretty; her brown eyes twinkled, and a smile played round her lips, and these said just as much as the eyes. She had delicate hands, and they were very white, but her neck and bosom were whiter still; you could see at a glance that she was one of the prettiest young girls in the town, and yet she was not engaged.

The hamper lay in her lap as the family drove out to the forest; and the neck of the bottle was sticking out from between the folds of the white tablecloth. There was red sealing-wax on the cork, and it looked straight into the young girl's face, and then it glanced at the young sailor who was sitting beside her. He was the son of a portrait painter, and had been her playmate, but he had lately passed his examination as mate, with honours, and the next morning he was going to join his ship, bound for a foreign land. There was a great deal of talk about this while the hamper was being unpacked, and during the conversation the eyes and lips of the furrier's pretty daughter showed no sign of joy.

The two young folk were wandering about under the

green trees, and talking. What were they talking about? Well, the bottle did not hear, for it was standing in the hamper. After a while it was taken out, and by this time everybody was merry, all eyes were laughing, and the furrier's daughter laughed too; but she spoke less than before, and her cheeks were blushing like two red roses. The father took the full bottle and the corkscrew. Now, it is rather curious when first you are going to be drawn; and the bottle-neck could never forget that solemn moment. It said, "Pop!" and the cork flew out, and then it gurgled as the wine poured forth into the glasses.

"Long life to the betrothed!" said the father; every glass was emptied to the dregs, and the young sailor kissed his pretty sweetheart.

"Happiness and blessing!" said the old couple, and the young man filled the glasses once more.

"Safe return, and a wedding this day twelvemonth!" he cried; and when the glasses were emptied he took the bottle, and lifted it up, saying: "You have witnessed the happiest day of my life: you shall serve no one else," and he threw it up in the air.

The furrier's daughter had no idea that she would ever see it fly again; but yet she did. The bottle fell amongst the rushes near the border of a little woodland lake. It remembered, just as if it had only been yesterday, how it lay there and thought: "I gave them wine, and they gave me water, but it was well meant."

It could no longer see the old couple, but for a long time it could hear them laughing and singing. But two

little peasant boys came by, and, peeping in amongst the rushes, saw the bottle and took it away; and now it was provided for. Their elder brother was a sailor, and yesterday he had been down to the lodge where they were living to say good-bye, for he was going away on one of his long voyages. Mother was just packing up one little thing and another for father to take to town in the evening. He was going to see his son once more before leaving, and give him his and his mother's blessing. There was a little bottle of gin in the parcel, but now the boys came in with the larger and stronger bottle which they had found, and there was more room in this than in the other. It was just the kind of drink for a weak digestion—there was hypericum in it. It was not with red wine, as before, that the bottle was now filled, but with these bitter drops, although they were just as good in their way. The new bottle was to go in place of the little one, and so again it started on its travels.

It was taken on board to Peter Jensen—to the very same ship as that in which the young mate was to sail; but he did not see the bottle, and he would not have recognised it, would certainly not have thought that it was the one from which they had drunk to the happiness of the betrothed and his safe return.

There was, in fact, no longer any wine in it, but something just as good; and whenever Peter Jensen brought it out, his messmates called it the "Apothecary." It contained a capital cure, and it continued to cure as long as there was a drop left in it. That was a happy time, and the

bottle sang when it was rubbed with a cork, and they called it the "great lark"—"Peter Jensen's lark."

It had been standing for quite a long time in a corner, when one night a storm arose. Whether it was on the voyage out or on the voyage home, the bottle never knew for certain, for it had not been ashore. The big black waves were rolling heavily; they lifted the ship up and threw it about, the mast fell, a wave knocked in a plank, and the pumps became useless.

It was a pitch-dark night when the ship sank, but at the last minute the young mate wrote on a piece of paper: "God's will be done! we are sinking!" He wrote the name of his betrothed, his own name, and that of the ship, and put the note in an empty bottle, corked it, and threw it into the raging sea.

He did not know that it was the same bottle from which they had drunk joy and hope to him and her. Now it was tossed about on the waves with a greeting and a message of death. The ship sank, the crew sank, but the bottle floated like a sea-bird, for now it had a heart—a love-letter—inside. The sun rose and the sun set, and to the bottle it seemed as if it were again in the first days of its life—the red glowing furnace into which it had longed to return. It met with calm weather and with rough, but it was not thrown against rocks, nor devoured by sharks, and it drifted about for over a year, now to the north, now to the south, just as the currents carried it. Otherwise it was its own master; but one may become tired even of this.

The written note, the last farewell from bridegroom to

bride, would bring only sorrow when once it came into her hands. But where were they—the hands so white and delicate that had spread the cloth over the fresh grass in the green forest on the day of the betrothal?

Where was the furrier's daughter—where was the shore, and which shore was the nearest? The bottle did not know. It drifted and drifted until it was quite tired of drifting. This was not really its purpose in life; but it drifted all the same, and at last it reached land on a foreign shore. It understood not a word of what was spoken there; it was not the language it had heard before; and one loses a great deal when one does not understand a language.

The bottle was fished up and examined. The note in it was soon taken out and turned over and over, but no one could decipher what was written there. They understood that the bottle had been thrown overboard, and that something was written on the paper; but what was written—that was a puzzle.

It was put back again, and the bottle was placed in a large room in a large house.

Every time a stranger came the note was taken out, and turned over and over, so that the writing, which was only in lead pencil, became more and more unreadable; until at last no one could recognise any letters at all.

For a whole year the bottle stood in a cupboard; and then it was taken up to a loft, where it became covered with dust and cobwebs. It thought of the happy days when, in the fresh green forest, it poured forth the rich red wine, and when it was tossed on the waves, and had a secret

to carry—a letter, a sigh of farewell. And thus it stood in the loft for twenty years. It might have stood there longer if the house had not been taken down.

The roof was pulled off, the bottle was seen and talked about, but it did not understand the language, for that cannot be learned by standing in a loft, even for twenty years.

“If I had been down in the room,” it thought, “I might have learnt it easily enough.”

Now it was washed and rinsed—and it needed it; it felt quite clear and transparent, quite young again, as in the old days, but the note it had been carrying disappeared down the sink. The bottle was now filled with seeds, though it did not know of what kind they were. It was corked and packed up, and saw neither lamp, nor light, nor sun, nor moon. And yet, it thought, one ought to see something when one travels; but it did not see anything. However, it did what was most important: it travelled home to its destination, and there it was unpacked.

“What a lot of trouble they have taken out there with this bottle!” said someone, “and it is sure to be cracked.” But it was not. The bottle understood every word that was said; it was the kind of language it had heard at the furnace and at the wine-merchant’s, in the forest, and on the ship—the only good old language that one can understand.

It had come home to its own country and received its welcome. From pure joy it nearly jumped out of the people’s hands; it hardly felt the drawing of the cork; and so the contents were shaken out, and the bottle was put in the cellar to lie hidden and forgotten.

But there is no place like home, even if it is a cellar. Never a thought occurred to it of how long it was lying there. It was so comfortable, and it lay there for years, till one day some people came down and took the bottle away.

Out in the garden there was a grand party. Lighted lamps were hanging in festoons, paper lanterns were shining like great tulips from the illuminated arbours. It was really a beautiful evening, the weather was so calm and clear, and the stars were shining brightly. It was new moon—in fact, you could see the whole moon, the whole round moon, as a bluish-grey ball with a gilt edge, and it looked very pretty to those who had good eyesight. Even the most distant walks were illuminated—at least, enough to see your way. Between the hedges bottles were placed holding candles and there sat the bottle we know so well, and which was one day to become only a bottle-neck serving as a water-glass in a birdcage.

At this moment everything seemed to the bottle exceedingly lovely; it was out again in the open, amidst joy and merry-making; again it heard music, and song, and the murmur and bustle of many people, especially from that part of the garden where lamps were burning and the lanterns shone with brilliant colours.

The bottle itself was standing in a side-walk, but it had something to think of; it held its light for the use and pleasure of everybody, and that is the right thing to do.

At such a moment one can forget that one has been for twenty years in a loft, and it is a good thing that one is able to forget it.

Close by went a couple arm-in-arm, like that betrothed pair, the mate and the furrier's daughter. To the bottle it was just as if it were living over again.

Besides the guests in the garden, other people, who had been invited to look at the festivities, were walking about, and among these was an old maid, who seemed to be all alone in the world. She was thinking of the same things as the bottle—of the green forest, and of the betrothed pair of whom she herself had been one. It had been the best moment of her life, and you can never forget that, even if you become an old maid; but she did not know the bottle, and the bottle did not know her, and thus we often pass one another in the world, although we meet again and again, as these two met, now that they lived in the same town.

The bottle went from the garden to the wine-merchant's, where it was again filled with wine, and was sold to the aëronaut who was going up next Sunday in a balloon.

There was a big crowd of people, and a regimental band, and a great deal of preparation.

The bottle saw it all from the hamper where it was lying, together with a live rabbit, which was rather sad, for it knew it was to be taken up and let down in a parachute. The bottle did not know anything about "up" and "down"; it only saw that the balloon was swelling larger and larger, and when it could swell no more it began to raise itself, higher and higher, becoming quite restless.

Then the ropes that held it down were cut, and so went the aëronaut, the hamper, the bottle, and the

rabbit. The band played, and the people shouted, "Hurrah!"

"It is very strange to go up in the air like this," thought the bottle; "it is a new way of sailing; at all events up here one cannot possibly run aground."

Thousands of people gazed at the balloon, and so did the old maid who sat at her window, where hung the cage with the little linnet, which had not even a proper water-glass, but had to put up with a cup.

On the window-sill stood a myrtle, now pushed a little to one side so as not to fall down when the old maid leaned out to look, and she distinctly saw the aëronaut in the balloon as he let the rabbit down with the parachute.

He drank to the health of everybody, and threw the bottle out into space. How little did she think that she had seen the same bottle fly high up into the air at that happy time in the green forest in her youthful days!

The bottle had no time to think—it all happened so unexpectedly; but suddenly it found itself higher than it had ever been in its life. The steeples and the roofs lay below, and all the people seemed very tiny.

Down came the bottle, much more rapidly than the rabbit; it turned somersaults in the air, and felt young and frisky; it was quite excited by the wind.

It did not last long, but what a voyage it was! Everybody could see the bottle, for the sun shone upon it. The balloon was already far away, and soon the bottle was away too; for it fell on one of the roofs and broke, and there was such a flight of pieces that they could not lie still, but

ran and rolled along, tumbling till they fell down into the yard, and there they lay in little bits. Only the bottle-neck kept whole, and it was cut as if with a diamond.

"This might very well be used for a water-glass in a



"This might very well be used for a water-glass in a birdcage,"
said the old man. (P. 45.)

birdcage," said the old man in the cellar; but he had neither bird nor cage, and he could scarcely be expected to get these just because he had a bottle-neck that could be used as a glass.

But the old maid in the attic—perhaps she might have

use for it? So the bottle-neck went up there, a cork was put into it, and the part which was uppermost before, was now turned down, as is often the case. It was filled with water, and hung outside the cage, and the little bird sang and twittered merrily.

"It is all very well for you to sing," said the bottle-neck. It was now regarded as important, for it had been in a balloon, but this was all they knew of its history.

Now it served as a water-glass in a birdcage, and could hear the noise and bustle of the people down in the street. It also heard the old maid speaking in the garret. An old friend of hers had just come to visit her, and they talked together, not about the bottle-neck, but of the myrtle in the window.

"You must not spend half-a-crown on your daughter's bridal bouquet," said the old maid. "I will get you a beautiful one, full of flowers; see how pretty the tree is. It is a cutting from the very myrtle-tree you gave me on the day of my betrothal, and from which I was to make my bridal crown a year after; but that day never came: those eyes are closed that should have been my light and joy for life. At the bottom of the sea my beloved sleeps peacefully. The tree was getting old, and so was I, and when it was nearly dying, I cut off the last spray and put it in the mould. That twig has now become a beautiful tree, and now at last it will serve at a wedding as a bridal crown."

Tears came into the old maid's eyes as she spoke of the beloved of her youth, and of their betrothal in the

forest. She thought of the toast which was drunk, and of the first kiss, but these she did not mention, for she was an old maid.

She thought of very many things, but she little thought that just outside her window there was still a souvenir of that time, now so long ago, when the neck of the bottle said, "Pop!" as the cork flew out.

Nor did the bottle-neck recognise her; it had not heard what she was talking about, simply because it was thinking only of itself.

THE MONEY-PIG.

THERE were a great many toys in the nursery. On the top of the cupboard stood the money-box, made of clay, in the shape of a little pig; it had been bought of the potter, and had a slit in the back, which had been made larger with a knife, so that whole dollar pieces could slip through. Two had already slipped into the box, besides a number of pence. The money-pig was stuffed so full that it could no longer rattle, and this is the highest point of perfection to which a money-pig can attain. There it stood on the top of the cupboard, looking down on everything else in the room. It knew very well that it could buy everything there with what it had in its inside, and that is what we call having a proper knowledge of one's worth.

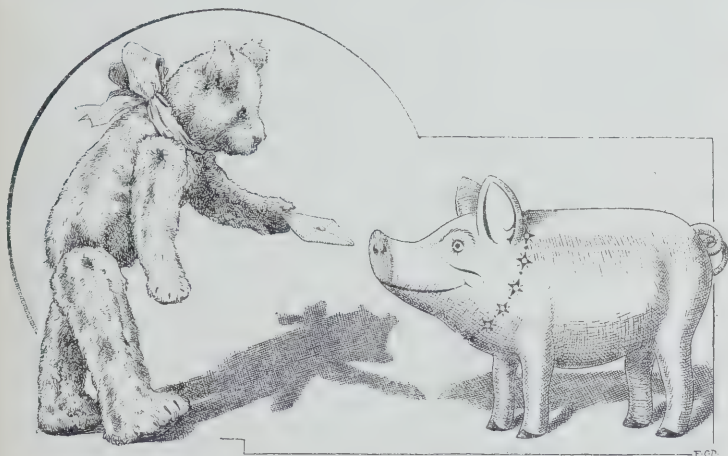
The others thought of that too, although they did not say so aloud; there were so many other things to speak of.

The cupboard-drawer was half open; there lay a big doll. She was rather old, and her neck had been mended. She looked out and said: "Let us play at being men and women; it will be something to do!"

Then there was a general bustle, and even the framed prints on the walls turned round, and showed that there

was a wrong side to them; although they did not do so as a protest.

It was in the middle of the night; the moon shone through the window, and gave its illumination for nothing. The game was now to begin. Everyone, even the perambulator, was invited—though he really belonged to the coarser playthings. "Everyone has his own peculiar value,"



The money-pig was the only one who received a written invitation.

(P. 49.)

said the perambulator; "we cannot all be noblemen; there must be someone to do the work, as the saying is."

The money-pig was the only one who received a written invitation, for he had a high position, and they were afraid he would not hear a verbal message. He did not answer to say whether he would come or not; and in point of fact, he did not come. If he was to take a part, he must enjoy the game from his own home; they would have to arrange accordingly, and so they did.

The little toy theatre was at once put up in such a way that the money-pig could look straight into it. They wanted to start with a comedy, and afterwards there was to be a tea-party and a discussion for mental improvement, but they began with the last part of the programme. The rocking-horse spoke of training and full blood; the perambulator of railways and steam-power, for these were subjects in their own line, which they felt able to discuss. The clock talked politics-tics-tics, and knew what time it was, though it was whispered that he did not go correctly; the bamboo cane stood there, stiff with conceit about his brass ferrule and his silver knob, for he was bound above and below; and on the sofa lay two worked cushions, very pretty and stupid. And now the play began.

All sat and looked on, and it was requested the audience should applaud, or clap their hands, or stamp, when they were pleased. But the riding-whip said that he never cracked for old people—only for the young ones who were not yet married.

“I crack for everything,” said the percussion-cap.

“One must be somewhere,” thought the spittoon.

And that was what everyone thought of being at the play.

The piece itself was worthless, but it was well played. All the characters turned their painted sides to the audience, for they were only intended to be looked at from the right, and not from the wrong, side. They played exceedingly well, coming out quite beyond the lamps, because the wires were a little too long, but this only caused them to be the

more easily seen. The mended doll got so excited that the mend in her neck broke; and the money-pig was so enchanted that he made up his mind to do something for one of the players—to remember him in his will, as the one who should be buried with him in the family vault, when the time came.

It was all very enjoyable. They gave up the idea of the tea-party, and kept on with the mental improvement. That was what they called playing at being men and women; and there was nothing wrong in it, for it was only play. Each one thought of himself, and of what the money-pig was thinking, but the thoughts of the money-pig went furthest of all, for he thought of making his will, and of his burial, and when this would happen.

Certainly far sooner than one would have expected—
or bang! down it fell from the cupboard, and there it lay on the ground, in little bits. The pennies hopped and danced, the little ones went spinning along, and the large ones rolled about, especially one of the big silver dollars, who wanted to roll out into the world. And out in the world it came, and so did all the rest of them. And the remains of the money-pig were put into the dustbin; for the next day a new money-pig, made of clay, was standing on the cupboard. It had not a penny in its inside, and therefore it could not rattle, and in this respect it resembled the other. That was at least a beginning—and with it we will make an end.

OLE LUK-OIE.

IN the whole world there is nobody who knows so many stories as Ole Luk-Oie. *He* really *can* tell stories.

It is in the evening, when the children are sitting nicely at table, or upon their stools, that Ole Luk-Oie comes. Softly he creeps up the stairs, for he walks in socks; opens the door very gently, and squirts sweet milk in the children's eyes—whisk! just a tiny drop, but quite enough to prevent them from keeping their eyes open; and so they cannot see him.

Then he steals just behind them, and blows softly at the back of their necks, so that their heads become heavy. But of course it does not hurt them, for Ole Luk-Oie is fond of the children, and only wants them to be quiet. They are most quiet when they are in bed; and they have to be very quiet indeed when Ole Luk-Oie tells them his stories.

When the children are nearly asleep, Ole Luk-Oie seats himself upon the bed. He is neatly dressed: his coat is of silk, but it is impossible to say of what colour, for it shines green, red, and blue, according to which side he turns. Under each arm he carries an umbrella. One is lined with pictures, and this he spreads over the good children, so that

they dream the most beautiful stories the whole night through; but on the other umbrella there are no pictures, and this he holds over the naughty children, so that they sleep heavily, and when they awake in the morning they have not dreamed at all.

We shall now hear how Ole Luk-Oie came every evening for a whole week to a little boy named Hjalmar, and what he told him. There are seven stories, for there are seven days in the week.

MONDAY.

"Listen," said Ole Luk-Oie in the evening, when he had put Hjalmar to bed; "I will now start decorating."

And all the flowers in the flower-pots became great trees, stretching out their long branches under the ceiling of the room and along the walls, so that the whole room looked like a most beautiful green-house. All the twigs were covered with flowers, each of which was prettier than a rose, and very fragrant, and if you could have tasted it, it would have seemed sweeter than jam. The fruit glittered like gold, and there were buns, bursting with raisins. It was marvellous! But all of a sudden dismal groans came from the drawer in the table, where Hjalmar's school-books lay.

"Now, what can that be?" said Ole Luk-Oie, and he went to the table, and opened the drawer. It was the slate which was cracking with distress, for a wrong number had got into the sum, so that it was nearly falling to pieces. The slate-pencil jumped and tugged at its string, as if it

had been a little dog; it wanted to correct the sum, but it could not.

Then came a moan from Hjalmar's copy-book: that also was wailing—it was terrible to hear. All the way down each page the capitals stood in a row, one underneath the other, each with a small letter at its side—that was the copy; but besides these there were a few more letters who thought they looked just like the copy—they were the letters which Hjalmar had written. But they were lying down, just as if they had tumbled over the pencil line on which they were to stand.

“Look—this is how you should hold yourselves,” said the copy, “sloping a little and with a bold swing.”

“Oh, we should very much like to,” said Hjalmar's letters; “but we cannot—we are too poorly.”

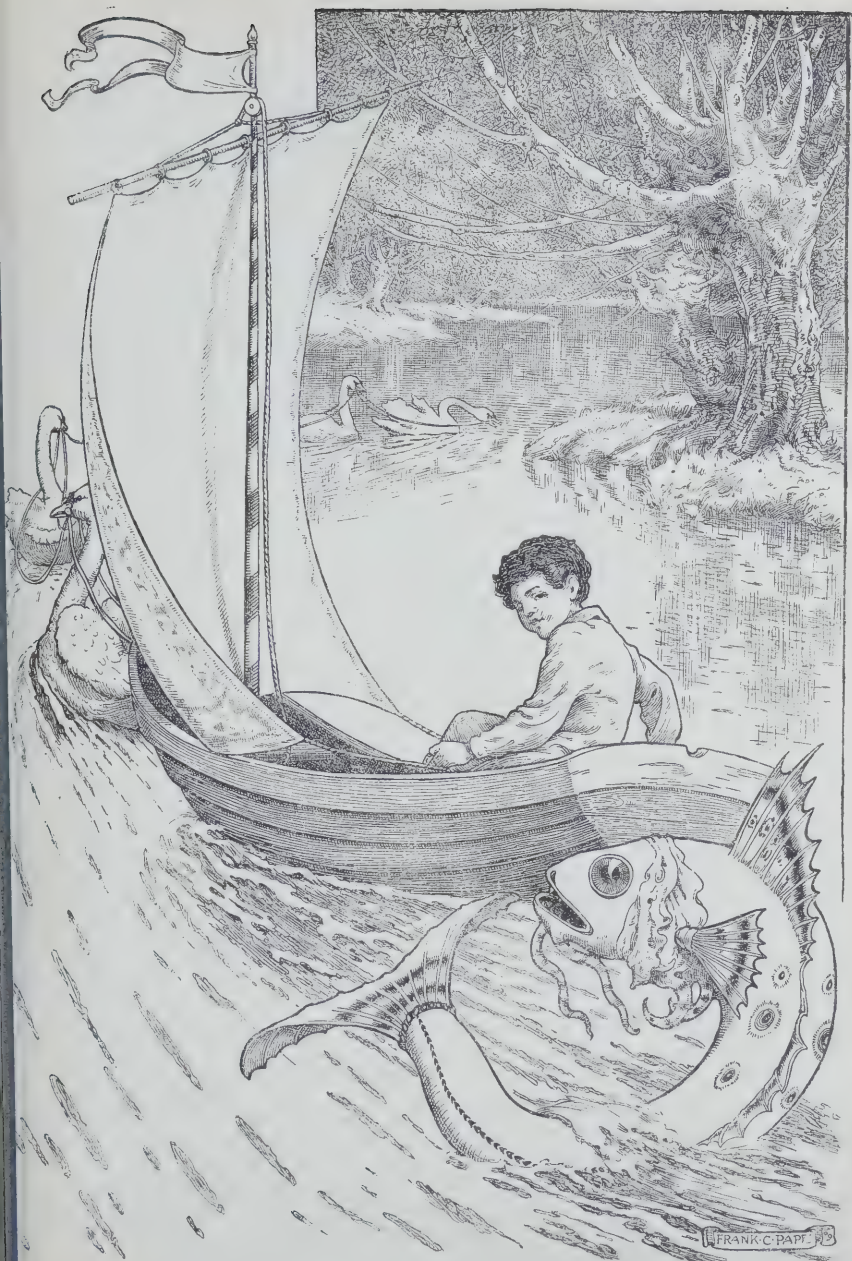
“Then you must take some medicine,” said Ole Luk-Oie.

“Oh, no!” they cried; and then they stood up so gracefully that it was a pleasure to look at them.

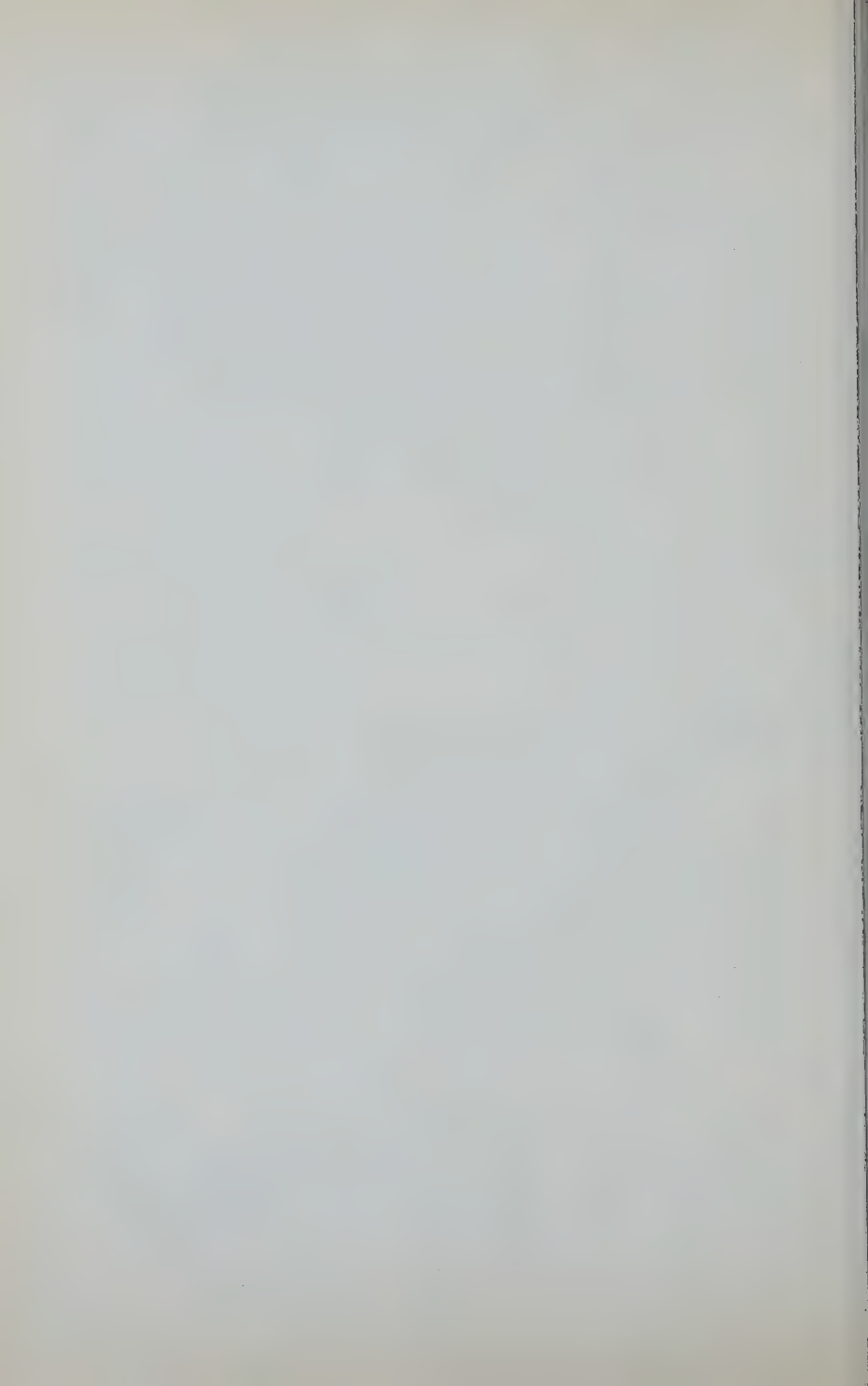
“Well, now we cannot have any more stories,” said Ole Luk-Oie, “for I must exercise them. One, two! one, two!” So he drilled the letters until they stood quite gracefully, and were as good as any copy could be. But when Ole Luk-Oie went away, and Hjalmar looked at them the next morning, they were quite as wretched as ever.

TUESDAY.

As soon as Hjalmar was in bed, Ole Luk-Oie touched every piece of furniture in the room with his little magic squirt, and all began to chatter and talk about themselves.



Gorgeous fishes swam after the boat, sometimes springing high into the air.
(P. 57.)



Only the spittoon was silent; it was vexed that they should be so vain as to speak and think only of themselves, without any regard for it, although it stood so modestly in the corner, for everybody's use.

Over the chest of drawers hung a large picture in a gilt frame; it was a landscape. One could see tall old trees, and flowers in the grass; there was a great lake, and a river that flowed round the forest, past many castles, and far out into the wide sea.

Ole Luk-Oie touched the painting with his magic squirt, and the birds in it began to sing, the branches of the trees moved, and the clouds floated along; one could see their shadows glide over the landscape. Then Ole Luk-Oie lifted little Hjalmar up to the frame, and Hjalmar put his feet into the picture, right into the high grass; and there he stood, while the sun shone upon him through the branches of the trees. He ran to the water, and seated himself in a little boat, which lay there; it was painted red and white, and the sails gleamed like silver. Six swans, wearing golden circlets round their necks, and twinkling blue stars on their heads, drew the boat past the great forest, where the trees told of robbers and witches, and the flowers spoke of graceful little elves, and of what the butterflies had said to them.

Gorgeous fishes, with scales like silver and gold, swam after the boat, sometimes springing high into the air and falling back with a splash into the water; the birds, blue and red, large and small, flew after them in two long lines; the gnats danced, and the cockchafers said, "Boom! boom!"

They all wanted to follow Hjalmar, and each one had story to tell.

It was really a beautiful voyage. At one time the forests were thick and dark, at another they looked like glorious garden full of sunlight and flowers. There were great palaces of glass and marble; on the balconies stood Princesses, and they were all little girls whom Hjalmar knew well—he had played with them before. Each one stretched forth her hand, and held out the prettiest sugar pig that a cake-woman could sell. Hjalmar took hold of one end of the sugar pig as he passed by, but the Princess also held fast, so that each of them got a piece—she the smaller part and Hjalmar the larger.

Before each palace stood little Princes as sentries. They presented arms with golden swords, and then it rained raisins and tin soldiers; they were real Princes. At one moment Hjalmar was sailing through forests, at another through great halls, or straight through the middle of a town. At last he came to the town of his old nurse, who had carried him in her arms when he was quite a little boy, and who had always been so fond of him. She nodded and beckoned, and sang the pretty verses she had composed and sent to Hjalmar:—

“To thee, sweet child, my thoughts still turn,
My little Hjalmar ever dear;
I think how often I have kissed
From thy bright eyes a glistening tear.
I heard them first, thy faltering words:
Alas! ‘Farewell’ I had to say;
God bless thee, dear, and keep thee safe,
And guide thee always on thy way!”

And all the birds sang too, the flowers danced on their stalks, and the old trees nodded, just as if Ole Luk-Oie had been telling stories to them.

WEDNESDAY.

How the rain was streaming down outside! Hjalmar could hear it in his sleep; and when Ole Luk-Oie opened the window, the water reached up to the window-sill. There was a lake outside, and a beautiful ship was moored to the house.

"If you will sail with me," said Ole Luk-Oie, "you may visit foreign countries to-night, and return again in the morning."

Then suddenly Hjalmar stood in his Sunday clothes on the noble ship, and the weather immediately became fine. They sailed through the streets, round by the church; and on every side was the wide sea. On and on they sailed, until no land was in sight, and they saw a flock of storks, which had also come from home, and was now travelling to the warm countries. The storks flew one behind the other; and in this way they had already travelled far, very far! One of them was so tired that his wings would scarcely carry him farther; he was the very last in the row, and had lagged a great deal behind the rest. At last he sank, with outspread wings, lower and lower; he made a few more strokes, but his efforts were useless; and at last he touched the rigging of the ship with his feet, then glided down the sail, and—bump! there he stood upon the deck. The cabin-boy took him and put him into the fowl-house, with the

fowls, ducks, and turkeys; the poor stork stood among them quite perplexed.

"Just look at that fellow!" said all the fowls.

The turkey-cock swelled himself up as much as he could, and asked the stork who he was; while the ducks walked backwards, and nudged one another, saying, "Quack! quack!"

The stork told them of torrid Africa, of the Pyramids, and of the ostrich which runs like a wild horse across the desert; but the ducks could not understand what he meant, and they nudged one another, saying: "We are all of opinion that he is a stupid fellow."

"Well, of course he is stupid," said the turkey-cock, and he gobbled.

Then the stork stood quite silent, thinking of Africa.

"Those legs of yours are very thin," said the turkey-cock. "What do they cost a yard?"

"Quack! quack! quack!" grinned all the ducks; but the stork pretended not to hear them.

"You might just as well laugh too," said the turkey-cock, "for that was a very witty remark. Perhaps it was too witty for you? Well, that fellow is not very smart; let us continue to entertain one another." And then the fowl cackled, and the ducks said, "Quack! quack! quack! quack!" It was wonderful how much fun they had among themselves.

But Hjalmar went to the fowl-house, opened the door, and called to the stork; which hopped out to him on to the deck.

By this time he had rested, and it seemed as if he

noddled at Hjalmar, to thank him. Then he spread his wings and flew away to the warm countries; but the fowls cackled, the ducks quacked, and the turkey-cock became fiery red in the face.

"To-morrow we shall make soup of you," said Hjalmar; and then he awoke to find himself lying in his little bed.

Ole Luk-Oie had taken him for a wonderful journey that night.

THURSDAY.

"I will tell you something," said Ole Luk-Oie. "Don't be afraid, I will show you a little mouse," and he held out his hand with the pretty little creature. "It has come to invite you to a wedding. Two little mice are going to be married to-night. They live under the floor of your mother's pantry; it is said to be such a nice place to live in!"

"But how can I get through the little mouse-hole in the floor?" asked Hjalmar.

"I will see to that," said Ole Luk-Oie. "I can manage to make you small enough."

And with his magic squirt he touched Hjalmar, who at once began to grow smaller and smaller, until at last he was scarcely as big as a finger.

"Now you can borrow the tin soldier's uniform; I think it will fit you; it looks well to wear uniform when one is in society."

"Of course," said Hjalmar.

And in a moment he was dressed like the smartest of tin soldiers.

"Will you be so kind as to take a seat in your mamma's thimble?" said the mouse; "I shall then have the honour of drawing you."

"Oh, dear! are you going to take this trouble yourself little miss?" said Hjalmar.

Then they drove to the mouse's wedding. They passed first through a long passage beneath the floor which was only just high enough to drive through in a thimble; and the whole passage was lit up with phosphorescent wood.

"Doesn't it smell nice here?" said the mouse, who was drawing the thimble. "The whole passage has been greased with bacon fat; it could not be more exquisite."

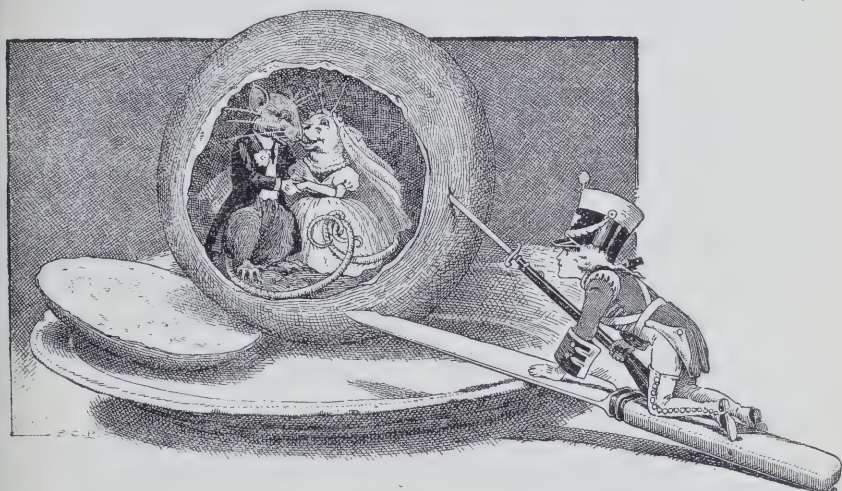
Then they came into the bridal hall. On the right hand stood all the little lady mice; and they whispered and giggled as if they were making fun of one another; on the left stood all the gentlemen mice, stroking their whiskers with their fore-paws; and in the centre of the hall you could see the bride and bridegroom, standing in a hollow cheese and kissing one another terribly before all the guests; for it had been a long engagement, and now they were about to be married.

More and more guests arrived, until the mice were nearly treading one another to death. The bridal pair had stationed themselves just in the doorway, so that one could neither come in nor go out. Like the passage, the floor had been greased with bacon fat, and that was the whole of the feast; but for dessert they produced a pea on which a mouse belonging to the family had bitten the name of the bride.

pair—that is to say, the first letter of the name: it was something quite extraordinary.

All the mice said it was a beautiful wedding, and that the entertainment had been very enjoyable.

So Hjalmar drove home again. He had been in very distinguished society; but he had been obliged to shrink together to make himself small, and to put on the tin soldier's uniform.



The bride and bridegroom, standing in a hollow cheese.

(P. 62.)

FRIDAY.

“It is wonderful how many grown-up people there are who would be glad to get hold of me!” said Ole Luk-Oie; “especially those who have done something wrong. ‘Good little Ole,’ they say to me, ‘we cannot close our eyes: we lie the whole night and see all our evil deeds, which sit on the bedstead like ugly little goblins, and squirt hot water

over us; do please come and drive them away, so that may have a good sleep—we should really be glad to for it. Good-night, Ole; the money lies on the window-sill. But I won't do it for money," said Ole Luk-Oie.

"What are we going to do to-night?"

"Well, I don't know if you care to go to another wedding again to-night. It is different from yesterday's; your sister's big doll, the one that looks like a man, and is called Hermann, is going to marry the doll Bertha. Besides, it is the doll's birthday, and there will be a great many presents."

"Yes, I know all about that," replied Hjalmar. "Whenever the dolls want new clothes, my sister lets them either keep their birthdays or have a wedding; it has happened at least a hundred times."

"Yes, but to-night is the hundred-and-first wedding, and when the hundred-and first is over, it is all over; and that is why this one will be so splendid. Just look!"

And Hjalmar looked at the table. There stood the little cardboard house with the windows illuminated, and in front of it all the tin soldiers were presenting arms. The bride and bridegroom sat on the floor, leaning against the leg of the table; they were quite thoughtful, as they had good reason to be. And Ole Luk-Oie, dressed up in the grandmother's black gown, married them to each other.

When the ceremony was over, all the pieces of furniture joined in the following pretty song, which the lead pencil had written. It went to the tune of the soldier's tattoo:—

“Our song like rustling winds shall sound
To the bridal pair, who now have bound
Their future fates together;
With a hip, hurrah! from every side,
And a merry cheer for groom and bride,
Though they’re only made of leather!”

And then came the presents, but they declined to accept anything eatable, for they were to live on love.

“Shall we go to a country-house or travel abroad?” asked the bridegroom.

So the swallow, who had travelled much, and the old hen in the yard, who had brought up five broods of chickens, were both consulted.

The swallow told them of the beautiful warm countries, where the air is mild, and the mountains glow with colours that are quite unknown here.

“But you have not met our Savoy cabbage,” said the hen. “I was lying one summer in the country with all my little ones: there was a gravel-pit, in which we could go about and scratch, and we also had admission to a garden full of Savoy cabbages. Oh! how green it was! I cannot imagine anything prettier.”

“But one cabbage-stalk resembles another,” said the swallow, “and we often have bad weather here.”

“Oh! one gets used to that,” said the hen.

“But it is cold here, and it sometimes freezes.”

“That is good for the cabbage,” said the hen. “Besides, we not also have warm weather? Four years ago did not have a summer that lasted for five weeks? It was

so hot here that one could scarcely breathe. And then in this country we have no poisonous animals, such as they have out there, and we are free from robbers. He is a villain who does not consider our country the most beautiful—he certainly does not deserve to be here!” And then the hen wept, and went on: “I also have travelled; I rode over twelve miles in a coop—there is no pleasure at all in travelling!”

“Yes; the hen is a sensible woman,” said the doll Bertha. “I don’t think anything of travelling among mountains, for it is only going up and coming down. No; we will move out to the gravel-pit and take a walk in the cabbage-garden.”

And so it was settled.

SATURDAY.

“Am I to hear any more stories now?” asked little Hjalmar, as soon as Ole Luk-Oie had put him to bed.

“We have no time for that this evening,” said Ole Luk-Oie; and he spread his finest umbrella over the child. “Now look at these Chinamen.”

And the whole umbrella looked like a great china bowl, with blue trees and painted bridges, upon which stood little Chinamen, nodding their heads.

“We must have the whole world nicely cleaned up for to-morrow morning,” said Ole, “for it is a holiday—it is Sunday. I must go to the church-steeple to see that the little church goblins are polishing the bells, so that they may sound sweetly. I must go out into the fields, and see

that the winds are blowing the dust from the grass and leaves; and—this is the greatest work of all—I must bring down all the stars to polish them. I have to number each one of them before I take them in my apron, and the holes in which they are fixed up there must be numbered as well, so that they may be put back in their right places, or they would not stick firmly, and then we should have too many shooting-stars, for they would be dropping down one after the other!”

“Do you know, Mr. Luk-Oie,” said an old portrait, which hung on the wall in the room where Hjalmar slept, “that I am Hjalmar’s great-grandfather? I am much obliged to you for telling the boy stories; but you must not confuse his ideas. The stars cannot be taken down and polished. They are spheres, just like our earth, and that is just the best thing about them.”

“I thank you, old grandfather,” said Ole Luk-Oie, “I thank you! You are the head of the family, the ancestral head; but I am older than you! I am an old heathen; the Romans and Greeks called me the Dream God. I have been in the noblest houses, and am admitted there still. I know how to act with great people and with small. Now you can tell *your* story!”

And Ole Luk-Oie took his umbrella, and went away.

“Well, nowadays, it seems, one may not even give an opinion,” grumbled the old portrait.

And Hjalmar awoke.

SUNDAY.

"Good morning," said Ole Luk-Oie.

Hjalmar nodded, and then he ran and turned his grandfather's portrait against the wall, so that it might not interrupt them, as it had done yesterday.

"Now you must tell me stories about the 'five green peas that lived in a pea-pod,' and about 'the cock's foot that courted the hen's foot,' and 'the darning-needle whose manners were so fine that she thought herself a sewing-needle.'"

"One may have too much of a good thing," said Ole Luk-Oie. "You know that I prefer to show you something! I will show you my brother. His name also is Ole Luk-Oie, but he never comes to anybody but once; those to whom he comes he takes upon his horse, and tells them stories. He only knows two: one is so exceedingly beautiful that no one in the world can imagine it; but the other is so horrible and dreadful that it cannot be described."

And then Ole Luk-Oie lifted little Hjalmar up to the window, and said—

"There you can see my brother, the other Ole Luk-Oie. They also call him Death! Do you see: he does not look so terrible as they make him in the picture-books, where he is only a skeleton. No; it is silver embroidery that he has on his coat; he wears a most beautiful hussar's uniform; and a mantle of black velvet flies behind him over the horse. See how he gallops along!"



"See how he gallops along!"

(P. 68.)

And Hjalmar saw how this Ole Luk-Oie rode along, taking upon his horse young people and old.

Some of them he put in front of him, and some behind; but he always asked first—

"How stands the mark-book?"

"Well," they all replied.

"Yes?—let me see it myself," he said.

Then each one had to show him the book, and those who had "Very well," and "Remarkably well," written in their books, were placed in front on his horse, and the pretty story was told to them; while those who had "Middling," or "Tolerably well," had to sit behind and hear the hideous tale. They trembled and wept, and wanted to jump off the horse, but this they could not do, for they were stuck fast.

"Death is a most beautiful Ole Luk-Oie," said Hjalmar. "I am not afraid of him!"

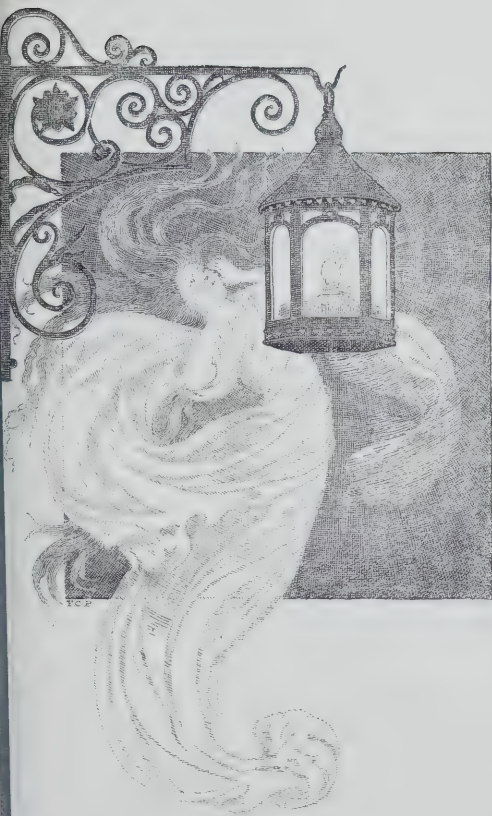
"Nor need you be," said Ole Luk-Oie; "but see that you have a good mark-book!"

"Yes, there is something to learn in that," muttered the great-grandfather's portrait. "It is of some use to give one's opinion."

And so he was satisfied.

That, you see, is the story of Ole Luk-Oie; he may perhaps tell you some more himself, to-night.

THE OLD STREET LAMP.



DID you ever hear the story of the Old Street Lamp? It is not a very funny story, but at any rate, it may be worth hearing for once. It was such an honest Old Street Lamp, and for very many years it had faithfully done its duty, but now it was about to retire. This evening it hung for the last time on its pole, and gave light to the street. It felt as an old ballet-girl might feel who is making her last appearance on the stage, and knows

The wind came rushing round the corner.

(P. 74.)

that to-morrow she will be forgotten in her garret. The Lamp was in great dread of the morrow, for it knew that it was to be taken for the first time to the Town Hall to be inspected by the six-and-thirty town councillors, who were to decide whether it was fit for further service. They would determine whether it should be sent to illuminate one of the bridges, or out in the country to a factory, or perhaps it would be despatched direct to some iron-foundry to be melted down. In this case anything might be made of it, but it was greatly exercised by the question whether it would remember, in its new state, that it had once been a Street Lamp. Whatever happened, it would be separated from the watchman and his wife, and it had come to regard itself as one of the family. When it first became a Street Lamp, the watchman—then young and vigorous—was first appointed to his post. Yes, it was now a long time ago!

The wife was rather proud at that time. Only in the evening, when she passed the Lamp, did she deign to look at it; in the daytime, never. But of recent years, when all three, the watchman, his wife, and the Lamp, had grown old together, the wife had assisted in cleaning and trimming it; and an honest pair they were, for they had never cheated it of a single drop of oil.

It was its last evening in the street, and to-morrow it was to be taken to the Town Hall. These reflections filled the Lamp with very sombre thoughts, so you can easily guess what kind of light it gave. But it thought, besides of many other things. It had seen so much in its time, had shone on so many events. It knew, perhaps, more than the

six-and-thirty councillors put together; but it did not say so, for it was an honest old Lamp, and would not hurt the feelings of anybody, and least of all those of the authorities.

Yes, it remembered many things, and now and then its flame would suddenly flash up—just as if the Lamp felt that it, too, would be remembered. “There was that handsome young man,” it thought; “many years ago he came with a letter; it was written on rose-coloured paper—very dainty it was, with a gilt edge; the writing was elegant—it was the hand-writing of a lady. He read it twice and kissed it, and he turned his eyes to me and said: ‘I am the happiest of men!’ Yes, only he and I knew what was written in that first letter from his true love.

“I remember also another pair of eyes; it is wonderful how one’s thoughts fly from one thing to another. Here, in this street, there was once a grand funeral. A beautiful young lady lay in a coffin on a velvet-covered bier; there were a great number of flowers and wreaths, and so many torches were burning that I was quite overpowered. The pavement was crowded with people who followed in the procession; but when the torches were gone, and I began to look round, one person was still standing against the post weeping. I shall never forget the mournful eyes that looked up to me.”

Many such thoughts passed through the mind of the old Street Lamp, which was shining to-night for the last time.

The sentry when relieved from his post knows at least who is to be his successor, and may whisper a few words

to him; but the Lamp did not know this, although it might have given a hint or two concerning rain or rough weather, together with some information as to how far the moon-shine lit up the pavement, and from what side the wind was blowing.

In the gutter stood three persons, who introduced themselves to the Lamp, thinking that it could appoint its own successor. The first was a herring's head that could shine in the dark. There would be a great saving of oil, it thought, if it were put at the top of the lamp-post. The second was a piece of rotten wood, which also gleamed in the dark—"More brightly, at any rate, than a haddock," it said to itself. Moreover, it was the last piece of a tree that had once been the glory of the forest. The third was a glow-worm. Whence it had come the Lamp could not make out, but the worm was there, and it shone. Both the rotten wood and the herring's head declared, however, most solemnly that the glow-worm only gave light at certain times, and that it had therefore no right to take part in the competition.

The Old Lamp remarked that none of them shone sufficiently to be a Street Lamp; but they refused to believe this, and when they heard that the Lamp itself could not appoint its successor, they declared that they were very glad to hear it, for in their opinion it was too worn-out to be able to make a proper choice.

At this moment the wind came rushing round the corner. It whistled through the Old Lamp, saying: "What do you hear? Are you going away to-morrow? Is it the last time that I shall meet you here? Well, then I must make you

a present. I will blow into your brain-box in such a way that you will not only remember clearly and distinctly what you have heard and seen, but you will become so clear-sighted as to see everything that is told or read about in your presence."

"Well, that is really a very fine gift," said the Old Lamp. "Many thanks! I only hope I am not going to be melted down."

"That will not happen yet," said the wind, "and now I will blow memory into you also. If you receive many presents like this, you will be able to pass your old age very pleasantly."

"I only hope I shall not be melted down," said the lamp; "but could you in that case still enable me to retain my memory?"

"Do be reasonable, Old Lamp," said the wind, and flew away. At the same moment the moon glided forth from behind the clouds. "What do you propose to give?" said the wind.

"I cannot give anything," said the moon; "I am on the wane. Besides, the lamps have never shone on my count; on the contrary, I have been shining for the benefit of the lamps." And she disappeared behind the clouds, so as to avoid being troubled again.

Just then a drop of water fell upon the Lamp, as if from the roof; but the drop explained that it came from the grey clouds, and was also a gift, perhaps the best of

"I shall penetrate you, so that you will have the power of turning into rust in a single night, and to crumble into

dust, if you wish it." This, the Lamp thought, was a shabby present, and the wind thought so too, and blew as loudly as he could: "Is there nothing better?"

Just then a brilliant shooting-star fell, leaving a bright gleaming streak in its wake. "What was that?" cried the herring's head. "Did not a star fall? I really think it went into the Lamp. Well, if such high-born persons apply for this post, we may just as well go home and go to bed." And this they did, all three.

But the Old Lamp shed a marvellously strong light around. "That was indeed a glorious gift! Those bright stars, which I have always admired, which shine more brilliantly than I have ever shone, although I have tried with all my might—they have noticed me, the poor Old Lamp. They have sent me a gift that will enable all those whom I love to see everything that I can remember and can see quite clearly; and in this lies the truest pleasure for joy that we cannot share with others is only half a joy.

"That is a very excellent sentiment," said the wind "but perhaps you do not know that wax-lights are necessary. If a wax-light be not lit up within you, nobody will be any the better for your faculties—you will not enable others to see anything. The stars have not thought of this; they think that everything that shines must at least have a wax-light inside. But now I am tired," said the wind; "I will go to rest." So it went down.

"Wax-lights, indeed!" exclaimed the Lamp. "I have never had them yet, nor am I likely to get them now. My only hope I shall not be melted down!"

The next day—well, we had better pass over the next day—but the next evening, the Lamp lay in a grandfather's chair. And where? Why, at the old watchman's house!

He had asked as a favour of the thirty-six town councillors that he might be allowed to keep the Old Lamp in consideration of his long and faithful service. He himself, he said, had first lit it on the day when he was appointed watchman four-and-twenty years ago. He looked upon it as his child, for he had no other; so they gave him the Lamp; and now it was lying in the grandfather's chair, close by the stove. It seemed as if it had grown bigger, for it occupied nearly the whole of the chair. As the old people sat down to supper, they looked kindly at the Lamp, to which they would willingly have granted a place at their table.

True, it was only in a cellar that they lived, two yards below the street, and one was obliged to go through a stone-paved passage to get into the room; but it was warm and comfortable when one got there, for strips of list had been nailed on to the door. It was all very trim and clean; curtains were hung round the bedstead and above the small windows, and on the window-sill stood two remarkable flower-pots. Christian, the sailor, had brought them home from the East or West Indies; they were made of clay, and represented two elephants, the backs of which were missing, but they were filled with earth. In one of them some fine onions were growing—that was the old people's vegetable-garden; in the other stood a large geranium in full bloom—this was their flower-garden. On the wall hung a large coloured print, representing the Congress of Vienna, showing

all the kings and emperors at once; a clock from Bornholm, with heavy leaden weights, went tic! tac! tic! tac!—it always went too fast, but this was better, said the old people, than if it were to be too slow.

They were eating their supper, and the Old Street Lamp was lying in the grandfather's chair, close to the warm stove. It seemed to the Lamp as if the whole world were turned upside down. But when the old watchman looked at it, and spoke of all that it had gone through, in storm and rain, in the bright, short summer nights, or through drifting snow, when it was nice to get into the shelter of the cellar, then everything seemed all right to the Old Lamp! It saw everything as if it still existed. Yes, the wind had certainly kindled a bright light within it.

The old people were very industrious and active; not a single hour was wasted. On Sunday afternoon a book of some kind was brought out, generally a book of travels, and the old man would read aloud about Africa, with its great forests, in which elephants were running about quite wild. The old woman would listen, and would then go over and look at the clay elephants which served as flower-pots. "I can almost imagine it," she said. But the Lamp greatly wished that a wax-taper could be lit up within it, for the old lady would then have been able to see everything just as the Lamp itself saw it—the tall trees with their branches closely intertwined, the naked negroes on horseback, and whole herds of elephants treading down bamboos and bushes with their broad feet.

"What is the use of all my good qualities when there

is no wax candle?" sighed the Lamp. "They have only oil and tallow candles, and that is not much."

One day a parcel of wax-candle-ends was brought down into the cellar. The larger pieces were burnt; and the smaller ones the old woman used to wax her thread when she was sewing. There were plenty of wax candles now, but it never occurred to anyone to put a little piece in the Lamp. "Here I stand with all my rare qualities," said the Lamp; "I have everything within me, but I cannot share it with others. They do not know that I can change these white walls into the most beautiful wall-paper, that I can transform them into magnificent forests, or to anything else that they may wish—they do not know that." The Lamp, however, neat and polished, was standing in a corner where it caught the eyes of everybody. Strangers might say it was a bit of rubbish; but the old folk took no notice, for they loved the Street Lamp.

One day—it was the watchman's birthday—the old woman went to the Lamp and said, smiling: "I will make an illumination for him." The old Lamp rattled, for it thought that at last the light would be lit; but oil was put into it, and not a wax taper. It burnt the whole evening; but it knew that the gift of the stars, the best gift of all, was a hidden treasure in this life. Then it dreamed—for when one possesses such faculties it is easy to dream—that the old people were dead, and that it was taken to an iron-foundry to be recast. It was just as much alarmed as when it was taken to the Town Hall to be examined by the six-and-thirty councillors; but although it had the power of

crumbling to rust and dust when it wished to, it did not make use of this gift. So it went into the furnace, and was turned into as beautiful a candlestick as anyone could wish to put a wax-light into. It had the shape of an angel holding a bouquet; in the middle of the bouquet the wax-candle was placed, and the candlestick was put on a green writing-table. It was a pleasant, comfortable room; there were many books, and beautiful pictures hung on the walls; it was the room of a poet. Everything that he thought and wrote appeared before him; the room was transformed into vast, dark forests, or into sunny meadows, where the stork strutted about, or again into the deck of a ship rolling in the foaming sea.

"What qualities I possess!" said the Lamp, when it awoke. "I could almost wish to be melted down—but no, that must not be, so long as the old people live; they love me for my own sake, I am as good as a child to them, they have polished me and filled me with oil, and I am just as well off as the picture of the Congress, which is certainly something very aristocratic."

And from that time forth it enjoyed more inward peace; and this the dear Old Street Lamp well deserved.

THE SWINEHERD.

THERE was once a poor Prince, who possessed a very small kingdom. It was, however, large enough to marry upon, and he greatly wished to find a wife. Now, it was certainly somewhat bold of him to say to the Emperor's daughter: "Will you have me?" but he did venture it; for his name was famous far and wide. There were hundreds of Princesses who would have said: "Thank you," into the bargain, but we shall see what she said. Now, listen.

On the grave of the Prince's father grew a rose-tree. Oh, what a beautiful rose-tree it was! It only bloomed once every five years, and even then it bore but a single rose; but what a rose! Its scent was so sweet that whoever smelt it forgot all sorrow and trouble.

The prince also possessed a nightingale that could sing as if all the most beautiful melodies were collected in its little throat. Both the rose and the nightingale the Princess was to have; so they were put into large silver boxes and sent to her. The Emperor ordered the presents to be taken into the large hall where the Princess was playing at "visiting" with her maids-of-honour. They never did anything else. When she saw the large boxes containing the presents the Princess clapped her hands with joy.

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"I hope it is a little pussy-cat," she said: but out came the beautiful rose.

"Oh, how wonderfully it is made!" said all the maids-of-honour. "It is more than nice—it is charming."

But the Princess touched it, and she almost began to cry. "Fie, Papal!" she said; "it is not artificial—it is only a natural rose!"

"Fie!" said all the maids-of-honour; "it is only a natural rose!"

"Let us first see what is in the other box before we get angry," said the Emperor: and out came the nightingale. It sang so sweetly that it was impossible at the moment to say anything in dispraise of it.

"*Superbe! charmant!*" said the maids-of-honour, for they all spoke French, each worse than the other.

"How that bird reminds me of the late Emperor's musical-box," said an old cavalier. "It has exactly the same tone, and the same expression."

"Yes," answered the Emperor, and he wept like a little child.

"I should scarcely think that it is a real bird," said the Princess.

"Oh, yes; it is a real bird," said those who had brought it.

"Then let the bird fly away," said the Princess; but she refused to allow the Prince to call.

The Prince, however, was not to be frightened; he smeared his face with brown and black dye, pressed his cap down over his face, and knocked at the door. "Good day

Emperor," he said; "could I not get a situation here in the palace?"

"Well, there are so many people who ask for an appointment," said the Emperor; "but let me see: I just need a person to look after the pigs, for we have a great many of them."

So the Prince was employed as Imperial swineherd. He received a poor little room down by the pig-sty, and there he had to stay. But the whole day long he sat and worked, and by the evening he had made a nice little pot with tiny bells all round it, so that when the pot boiled the bells rang out merrily, and played the old tune: —

"Oh, my darling Augustine!

All is lost, lost, lost!"

But the most peculiar thing was, that by holding one's fingers in the steam of the pot, one could smell what kind of meals were being prepared in each kitchen in the town. You see, it was quite a different thing from the rose.

Now, the Princess was out walking with all her maids-of-honour, and when she heard the tune she stopped at once, and looked greatly pleased, for she, too, could play "Oh, my darling Augustine." This was the only tune that she could play on the piano, but then she played it with only one finger.

"Why, that is the tune I play," she exclaimed; "he must be a well-educated swineherd. Listen! you must go in and ask him what the price of that instrument is."

So one of the maids-of-honour had to go in, but she first put on a pair of slippers.

"What do you want for the pot?" asked the maid-of-honour.

"I want ten kisses from the Princess," said the swineherd.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed the maid-of-honour.

"I cannot make it cheaper," said the swineherd.

"Well, what does he say?" asked the Princess.

"I really can't repeat it," said the maid-of-honour; "it is too horrible."

"Well, you can whisper it." So the lady whispered it.

"He is very rude," said the Princess; and walked away. But when she had gone a little way, the bells began to ring again, very sweetly:—

"Oh, my darling Augustine!

All is lost, lost, lost!"

"Listen," said the Princess: "ask him if he will take ten kisses from my maids-of-honour."

"No, thank you," said the swineherd; "ten kisses from the Princess, or I keep the pot."

"Oh, how tiresome!" said the Princess; "well, you must stand round me so that nobody can see it." And the maids-of-honour stood round her, the swineherd received the ten kisses, and the Princess got the pot. Then there was great rejoicing! In the evening, and the whole day long, the pot was kept boiling; there was not a kitchen in the whole town of which they did not know what it had cooked, at the chamberlain's as well as at the shoemaker's. The maids-of-honour danced and clapped their hands.

"We know who is going to have sweet soup and pancakes; we know who is going to have gruel and cutlets."

"How very interesting, very interesting indeed!" said the lady superintendent.

"Yes, but you must keep quiet," said the Princess, "for I am the Emperor's daughter." "Quite so!" said everyone.

The swineherd—that is to say, the Prince, although so far as they knew, he was only an ordinary swineherd—did not let a day go past without making something. One day he made a rattle. When he swung it round it played all the waltzes, schottisches, and polkas that had been composed since the creation of the world.

"This is superb," said the Princess, as she went past; "I have never heard such a beautiful composition before. Go in and ask him what that instrument costs; but I won't kiss him."

"He wants a hundred kisses from the Princess," said the maid-of-honour, who went in to ask him.

"He must be mad," exclaimed the Princess, and went off, but when she had gone a little way, she stopped. "One must encourage art," she said. "I am the Emperor's daughter. Tell him he shall have ten kisses, as yesterday; the rest he can have from my maids-of-honour."

"Oh, but we would rather not!" said the maids-of-honour.

"That is all nonsense," said the Princess; "if I can kiss, you can kiss too. You must remember that I give you board and wages." So the maid-of-honour had to go down to the swineherd again.

"A hundred kisses from the Princess," said he, "or each shall keep his own."

"Stand round," she said, and all the maids-of-honour stood round while he kissed the Princess.

"What is that crowd down by the pig-sty?" said the Emperor, who had stepped on to the balcony. He rubbed his eyes and put his spectacles on. "Yes, it is the maids-of-honour in mischief again. I must see what they are



The maids-of-honour were so busy in counting the kisses. (P. 86.)

doing." So he pulled his slippers up behind, for they were shoes which he had trodden down. Mercy! how he hurried. When he came into the yard he walked very softly, and the maids-of-honour were so busy in counting the kisses, so that everything should be fair, and that the swineherd should not get too many, and yet not too few, that they

did not notice the Emperor. He stood on tiptoe. "What!" said he, when he saw that the swineherd and the Princess were kissing each other; and he hit them on the head with his slipper, just as the swineherd received his eighty-sixth kiss. "Be off with you!" cried the Emperor, for he was angry, and both the Princess and the swineherd were expelled from the empire. There she stood crying, and the swineherd scolded her, while the rain poured in torrents. "Oh! miserable wretch that I am," said the Princess; "if I had only taken the handsome Prince. Oh! how unhappy I am."

But the swineherd went behind a tree, washed the black and brown dye from his face, threw away the shabby clothes, and came forward in princely attire, so handsome that the Princess had to bow to him. "I have learned to despise you," said he. "You would not have an honest prince, you did not value the rose and the nightingale, but you kissed a swineherd for a mere plaything; now you can do what you like." And so he went back into his kingdom, locked the door, and fastened the bolt. And she might stand outside and sing: —

"Oh, my darling Augustine!
All is lost, lost, lost!"

THE LITTLE MERMAID.

FAR out in the ocean the water is as blue as the loveliest corn-flower, and as clear as the purest crystal; but it is very deep—much deeper than any anchor-chain can fathom, and many church steeples would have to be placed one above the other to reach from the bottom to the surface above. Down there live the sea-folk.

Now, you must not imagine that there is only the bare white sand at the bottom; no, indeed, for the most wonderful trees and plants grow there, with stalks and leaves so pliant that they move with the slightest motion of the water, almost as though they were alive. In and out among the branches dart fishes, great and small, just like birds in the trees here above.

At the very deepest spot lies the Sea-King's palace. Its walls are of coral, and the tall pointed windows are of the clearest amber; but the roof is of mussel-shells, which open and shut as the water flows over them. It is beautiful to look at, for in each of these shells lie glittering pearls, any one of which would be a treasure in the diadem of a queen.

The Sea-King down there had for many years been a widower, and his old mother kept house for him. She was



She cared for nothing but a beautiful marble statue.

(The Little Mermaid.)

a sensible old lady, but very proud of her noble birth and high station, on account of which she always wore twelve oysters on her tail, whereas others of high rank were allowed to wear only six. Otherwise, she deserved great praise, especially for the love she bore towards the little sea-princesses, her grand-daughters.

There were six of them—beautiful children, but the youngest was the prettiest of them all. Her skin was as clear and delicate as a rose-leaf; her eyes were as blue as the deepest sea; but, like all the others, she had no feet: her body ended in a fish-tail. The whole day long they would play about in the castle, in the spacious halls, where living flowers were growing on the walls.

When the large amber windows were opened the fish would swim in, just as the swallows fly into our rooms. But the fish would swim straight up to the little princesses, eat from their hands, and allow themselves to be caressed.

Outside, in front of the castle, there was a large garden, with bright red and dark blue trees; the fruit glittered like gold, and the flowers shone like flaming fire, as the stalks and leaves incessantly swayed to and fro.

The sea-bed itself was of the finest sand, but as blue as burning brimstone; and over the whole scene there was a wonderful blue radiance, so that it would be easier to imagine oneself high up in the air, with the sky above and beneath, than down at the bottom of the sea. In calm weather, the sun could be seen, looking like a purple flower, from the chalice of which was streaming the light of all the world.

Each of the little princesses had her own spot in the garden, where she could dig and plant just as she pleased. One gave her little garden the shape of a whale; another thought it better to make hers like a little mermaid; but the youngest made hers quite round, and had only flowers that shone as red as the sun. She was a strange child, quiet and thoughtful; and when her sisters laid out their gardens with the most beautiful things that they could get from wrecked ships, she cared for nothing but her flowers, red like the sun, and a beautiful marble statue—a figure of a charming boy, hewn out of the whitest and clearest stone—which had fallen from a wrecked ship to the bottom of the sea.

Beside it she planted a rose-coloured weeping willow, which grew famously, its slight fresh branches drooping over the statue towards the blue sandy bed of the sea, where the purple shadow moved with every movement of the branches. It looked as if the tree and the roots were playing together and kissing each other.

Nothing pleased her more than to hear about the world above the sea. She made the old grandmother tell her everything she knew about the ships, and the towns, the people, and the animals. It seemed most wonderful to her that on the earth the flowers should have fragrance (for at the bottom of the sea they have no scent), that the forest should be green, and that the fish which they saw amongst the trees could sing so sweetly that it was quite a pleasure to hear them. It was the little birds that the grandmother called “fish”; otherwise the princesses would not have understood her, for they had never seen a bird.

"When you are fifteen years old," said the grandmother, "I will let you go up to the surface, and sit on the rocks in the moonlight, and see the great ships that go sailing by. Then you will see forests and towns."

In the following year the eldest of the sisters was fifteen, but the rest—well, each was a year younger than the other, and the youngest of them had therefore five whole years to wait before she could come up from the bottom of the ocean to see what it is like in the upper world. The eldest, however, promised to tell the others what she had seen and found most beautiful on the first day, for their grandmother did not tell them enough—there was so much that they wished to know.

None of them longed to go so much as the youngest—just the one who had to wait the longest time, the one who was so quiet and thoughtful. Many a night she sat by the open window, and looked out through the deep blue water, where the fish were splashing about with their fins and tails. The moon and stars she could see; of course they were shining very faintly, but through the water they looked very much larger than to our eyes; and if now and then a black cloud seemed to glide beneath them, she knew that it was either a whale that was swimming above her, or a ship with many people in it. They could never have imagined that such a lovely little mermaid was standing beneath them, stretching forth her white hands towards the keel.

Now, the eldest princess had just reached her fifteenth year, and had been up to the surface. When she came

back, she had hundreds of things to tell; but the most delightful thing, she said, was to lie on the sandbank in the moonlight by the calm sea, and look at the great town on the shore, where the lights were blinking like hundreds of stars, and listen to the music and to the noise of the traffic and the voices of the people; to see the many church towers and spires, and hear the ringing of the bells.

The youngest sister, just because she could not go up there, longed all the more to see these things. Oh! how eagerly she listened; and when she lay in the evening by the open window, and looked up through the deep blue water, she thought of that big town with its noise and bustle, and fancied she, too, could hear the ringing of the bells.

The next year the second sister received permission to visit the surface of the water and swim wherever she pleased. She rose up just as the sun was setting, and this, she thought, was the most beautiful sight of all. The whole sky, she said, looked like gold, and as for the clouds—well, she simply could not describe their beauty. Some red, some violet, they sailed along; but even more quickly than they, a flock of white swans, looking like a long white veil, flew across the sea. She was swimming towards the sun, but it sank, and the rosy hue faded from the clouds and from the sea.

The next year the third sister came up; she was the boldest of them all, for she swam all the way up a broad river that was flowing into the sea. She saw beautiful green hills, covered with vines, and palaces and farms peeping out from between the grand forest trees. She heard the birds

singing, and the sun was shining so warmly that she had to dart down under the water to cool her burning face.

In a little bay she found a number of children, who, quite naked, were running about and splashing in the water; she wanted to play with them, but they ran away quite frightened. Then there came a little black animal: it was a dog, but she had never seen a dog before, and it barked so furiously at her that she became frightened, and swam back again to the open sea. But never could she forget the beautiful forests, the green hills, and the pretty children who could swim in the water, although they had no fish-tails.

The fourth sister was not so bold; she stayed out in the open sea, and declared that that was the most beautiful place of all. You could see so many miles around, and the sky above looked like a big glass ball. She had seen ships, but so far away that they seemed like sea-gulls; the quaint dolphins were turning somersaults, and the great whales were spouting water from their nostrils as if hundreds of fountains were playing on every side.

Now came the turn of the fifth sister. Her birthday fell in the winter, and she saw, therefore, what the others had not seen on their first visit. The sea seemed quite green, and in all directions large icebergs were floating about. Each of them, she said, looked like a pearl, but was very much larger than the church towers built by men. They took the most wonderful shapes, and glittered just like diamonds. She seated herself on one of the largest, but all the ships steered away in terror from the iceberg where she sat, her long hair floating in the wind.

Towards evening the sky was covered with clouds the lightning flashed, and the thunder rolled; whilst the black sea tossed the huge ice-blocks high up into the air where they shone in the strong glare of the lightning. On all the ships the sails were furled in terror and dismay; but she sat quietly on her floating iceberg, and watched the blue zig-zag lightning flashes disappear into the glittering sea.

When first the sisters came up to the surface of the ocean, they were delighted with the new and beautiful things they saw; but after a time, as grown-up mermaidens, they became quite indifferent, for, as they could visit the upper world whenever they liked, they soon wished themselves back home again. After a month's time they said it was much more beautiful down below, and, besides, it was so nice to be home! Yet many an evening the five sisters went up to the surface arm-in-arm; beautiful voices they had, more beautiful than those of human beings, and when a storm was coming on, and they thought that a ship might get lost, they swam at the bow, and sang oh! so sweetly, of the beauties of the depths below, and begged the seamen not to be afraid to come down to them. But the sailors could not understand their song; they thought it was the whistling of the storm, and thus they never saw the splendours below, for when the ship went down, the crew were drowned, and sank as dead men to the Sea-King's palace.

When the sisters in the evening floated up arm-in-arm through the sea, their little sister used to stand quite alone, looking after them. She would have wept, but a mermaid has no tears, and therefore suffers all the more.

"Oh! were I but fifteen years old!" she cried; "I know that I should love the world above, and the people who live there."

At last she reached her fifteenth year. "Well, now, you are of age," said her grandmother, the old dowager queen. "Come, let me dress you prettily like your other sisters," and so she put a wreath of white lilies in her hair, but each petal in the flower was a half-pearl, and the old lady caused eight large oysters to cling to the princess's tail, as a sign of high rank.

"They hurt me!" cried the little mermaid,

"One must suffer for one's pride," said the old lady.

Oh! what would she not have given to throw off all this splendour, and lay aside the heavy crown. The red flowers in her garden would have become her much better, but alas! she had no choice. "Good-bye," she said, and as light and as clear as a bubble she rose up through the sea.

The sun had just set as she raised her head above the surface, but the clouds were still tinged with a light of gold and rose, and high up in the pale, purple sky, bright and beautiful, shone the evening star. The sea was calm, and the air was mild and fresh. There lay a great ship with three masts, but one sail only was set, for there was scarcely a breath of wind, and the sailors were sitting in the shrouds and on the yards. There was music and singing, and as the evening grew darker, hundreds of bright-coloured lanterns were lit; it seemed as if the flags of all nations were fluttering in the air. The little mermaid swam close up to the cabin window, and now and then, as the waves

lifted her up, she looked in through the clear glass panes, and saw a great many well-dressed people. But the handsomest amongst them was the young Prince with the large black eyes. He was certainly not more than sixteen years old; it was his birthday, and that was the reason of all this festivity. The men were dancing on the deck, and as the young Prince came out of the cabin, hundreds of rockets blazed up into the air, making the scene as bright as day. The little mermaid was so frightened that she dived beneath the water, but she soon came up again, and then it seemed as if all the stars of heaven were falling down upon her. Never had she seen such fireworks; great suns were revolving around her, wondrous fire-fish hovered in the air, and all was reflected in the clear, calm sea beneath. The whole ship was so brilliantly lit up that all the people and every little rope could be seen. Oh! how handsome the young Prince was! And he shook hands with the sailors, and smiled, and laughed, while sweet strains of music floated in the soft night air.

It was getting late, but the little mermaid could not take her eyes away from the ship and the beautiful Prince. The brightly-coloured lanterns were put out, no more rockets were rising in the air, and the guns had ceased firing; but deep in the sea there was a hissing and a moaning. The little mermaid was rocking up and down on the waves, and so she could see into the cabin; but the ship began to move faster, and one sail after the other was unfurled. Then the waves rose higher, heavy clouds came up, and lightning flashed in the far distance.

"A terrible storm is coming," thought the crew, and so they again furled the sails. The huge ship was plunging at wild speed through the raging sea; the waves rose like great dark mountains, and looked as if they wished to hurl themselves over the masts, but the vessel dived like a swan between them, and rose again on their lofty crests. To the little mermaid it all seemed delightful, but the sailors thought otherwise. The ship groaned and creaked, the thick planks gave way under the thud of the waves, the mainmast snapped like a reed, and the ship lurched over on her side, while the water rushed in.

Now the little mermaid saw that the ship was in danger, and she herself had carefully to avoid the wreckage that was drifting about. At times it was pitch dark, and she could see nothing at all; but when the lightning flashed, the whole scene was so brilliantly lit up that she could see everyone on board. Each was struggling as best he could, but she was searching for the young Prince, and as the ship broke up, she saw him sinking into the depths of the sea.

At first she was delighted, but then she remembered that human beings cannot survive in the water: that he could not enter her father's palace alive. No! no! he must not die!—so she swam among the wreckage that was drifting about, without thinking that it might have crushed her. And so, now deep down in the water, now rising up to the crests of the waves, she at last came to the young Prince, who, nearly exhausted, was swimming in the raging sea. His limbs began to fail him, his beautiful eyes were closing; and he would surely have died had not the little mermaid

come to his aid. She held his head above the water and let the waves carry her and him whithersoever they wished.

In the morning the storm was over, but of the ship not a trace could be seen. The sun rose red and glowing from the sea, and its rays seemed to bring back the hue of life to the Prince's cheeks, but still his eyes remained closed. The mermaid kissed his fair high forehead, and stroked back the wet hair; he looked to her like the marble statue in her garden, and she kissed him again, and hoped that he might live.

In the distance she could see the shore, with its lofty blue mountains, their snowy peaks shining like a flock of white swans. Along the coast were beautiful green forests, and nestling among them lay a church or a convent, she did not know which, but it was a building of some kind. In its garden were orange and citron trees, and tall palms grew in front of the gates. The sea here formed a little bay, and the water was calm, but very deep right to the rocks, against which the fine white sand had been washed up. She swam thither with the handsome Prince, and laid him on the sand, taking care that his head should lie in the warm sunshine.

The bells began ringing in the great white building, and a number of young girls came out to walk in the garden. So the little mermaid swam farther out, and hid herself behind some high rocks that rose above the surface of the sea, covering her hair and breast with sea-foam, so that her little face could not be seen; and then she watched to see who would come to find the poor Prince.

Before long a young girl approached. At first she seemed greatly frightened, but only for a moment, for she ran to fetch someone else, and the mermaid saw how the Prince was brought to life, and how he smiled on all around. But on her he did not smile, for he did not know that she had saved him. She felt very sorrowful, and when he was carried into the great house, she dived mournfully beneath the waves, and made her way back to her father's palace. She had always been silent and thoughtful, but now she became even more so than before. Her sisters asked her what she had seen, but she told them nothing. Many a morning and evening she went up to the place where she had left the Prince. She saw how the fruits in the garden ripened and were gathered; she saw how the snow melted on the lofty mountains; but the Prince she could not see, and she returned home more unhappy than ever. Her only comfort was to sit in her little garden, and fling her arms around the beautiful marble statue that resembled the Prince. Of her flowers she took no heed; they grew, as if in a wilderness, over the paths, twining their long stems and leaves around the branches of the trees, making the whole place look sad and gloomy. At last she could keep her secret no longer; she told it to one of her sisters, who told it to the rest; but no one else knew of it, save one or two other mermaids, who told it only to their dearest friends. One of these knew who the Prince was. She also had seen the festivities on the ship, and knew whence the Prince came, and where his kingdom lay.

"Come, little sister," said the other princesses, and,

linked together arm-in-arm, they rose in a long chain through the waves, to the place where the Prince's palace lay. It was built of a pale yellow, glittering stone, and there were large flights of marble steps, one of which led down to the very edge of the water. Magnificent golden domes rose above the roof, and between the pillars surrounding the building stood huge marble statues looking as real as life. Through the clear glass in the tall windows one could see into the magnificent halls, hung with costly silk curtains and tapestry, and the walls were covered with beautiful paintings—it was indeed delightful to behold. In the centre of the grandest hall a large fountain was playing, its jets rising high up towards the glass dome in the roof, through which the sun glittered on the water and on the beautiful plants growing in the great basin.

The little mermaid now knew where he lived, and thither she rose many an evening and many a night, from the depths of the sea. She swam far closer to the land than any of the others had dared; in fact, she went right up the small canal to the place where a splendid marble balcony cast its long shadow upon the water. There she sat and gazed at the Prince, who thought that he was quite alone in the bright moonlight. On many an evening she saw him sailing amid the strains of music in his magnificently decorated boat, with its flags waving in the breeze. She peeped out through the green rushes, and when the wind caught her long silvery-white veil, anyone who noticed it merely thought it was a swan spreading its wings.

At night, when the fishermen were casting their nets

by torchlight, she overheard them talking of the many kind things the Prince had done. It made her happy to think that she had saved his life when he was drifting half dead on the waves, and she remembered how his head had rested on her bosom, and how heartily she had kissed him; but he knew nothing of it all, and could not even dream of her.

Day by day human beings became more dear to her—more and more she wished that she could go up and live amongst them—their world seemed to her so much larger than her own. They could fly on ships over the sea; they could climb lofty mountains higher than the clouds, and the land they owned stretched out in woods and meadows farther than her eye could see. There were so many things that she would like to know, and as her sisters were not able to answer all her questions, she asked her old grandmother, who knew all about the upper world, which she rightly enough called “the land above the sea.”

“If human beings are not drowned,” asked the little mermaid, “do they never die, as we die down here in the sea?”

“Yes,” replied the old lady, “they also must die, and their lifetime is even shorter than ours. We mer-people live three hundred years, but when we cease to exist, we become merely foam on the sea, and have not even a grave among our loved ones. We have not an immortal soul: for us there is no life hereafter; we are like the green rushes which, when once cut down, are never green again. But man has a soul that lives for ever—lives when the body has returned to dust—rising up through the pure trans-

parent air, up to the twinkling stars; just as we rise through the waters to see the land above, so they rise up to the unknown beautiful cities, which we can never see."

"Why did we not receive immortal souls?" asked the little mermaid, full of sorrow. "I would give all the hundreds of years that I have yet to live to be a human being, if only for one day, and then to share in the heavenly world."

"You must not think of that," said the grandmother; "we are much better off and happier down here than are the folk above."

"Then I must die, and float as foam upon the sea, hear no more the music of the waves, no longer see the beautiful flowers and the bright sun! Can I do nothing to win an immortal soul?"

"No," said the old lady, "not unless a human being were to love you—love you so dearly that you should be more to him even than father or mother; not unless he cling to you with all his heart and all his soul, and bid the priest to place his right hand in yours, promising to be faithful to you here and in eternity: then would his soul pass into your body, and you would share the happiness of mankind; he would give you a soul, and nevertheless retain his own. But that can never be; for your fish-tail, which we think to be so beautiful down here in the sea, would be thought ugly upon the earth; they know no better, for there, if you would look pretty, you must have two clumsy props which they call legs." The little mermaid sighed, and looked sadly at her fish-tail.

"Let us be contented," said the grandmother; "let us

enjoy ourselves for the three hundred years we have to live, and that is quite long enough; after that we can rest all the better. To-night there is a ball at Court."

It was a magnificent sight, such as you could never see on earth. The walls and ceiling in the grand ball-room were of thick transparent glass, and ranged along them were many hundreds of huge mussel-shells, some the colour of roses, others green as grass, but all giving forth a blueish light that illuminated the whole room, and shone through the walls, lighting up the sea outside. Countless fishes, large and small, could be seen swimming towards the glass walls; the scales of some flashing in purple hues, others glittering like silver and gold. Through the centre of the hall ran a broad stream; and here the mermen and the mermaids were dancing to the music of their own voices, lovelier far than those of any human beings. Our little princess sang most sweetly of all, and they clapped their hands, and applauded her, so that for the moment she felt light of heart, for she knew that hers was the sweetest voice of earth and sea. But then she thought of the world above, for she could not forget the beautiful Prince, nor her grief that she did not possess an immortal soul like his. So she stole out of her father's palace, and while joy and merriment reigned within, sat, full of sorrow, in her little garden. Then, from far above through the waters came the sound of a bugle, and she thought:

"Now he is sailing up there, he whom I love more than my father and mother, he of whom my soul is full, and in whose hand I would gladly lay my life's happiness.

I would risk everything to win him and an immortal soul. While my sisters are dancing in my father's palace, I will go to the sea-witch whom I have always feared so much. She perchance may be able to advise me and help me."

The little mermaid went out of her garden towards the foaming whirlpools behind which the sea-witch had her home. She had never been that way before; there were no flowers there, no seaweeds, but only a stretch of bare grey sand leading towards the maelstrom, where the current, like a whirling mili-wheel, spun round and round, carrying everything with it into the deep. Through these rushing whirlpools the little maid had to make her way to reach the domain of the sea-witch, and for a long way the only pathway led over hot bubbling mud, which the witch called her turf moor. Beyond it stood her house, in the centre of a gruesome forest, in which all the trees and bushes were polypi—half animal and half plant, like a snake with a hundred heads, springing out of the ground. The branches were long slimy arms, with fingers like worms, and every part was ceaselessly wriggling from the root to the uttermost tip. They twirled themselves round everything within their reach, and, when once in their grasp, nothing was ever allowed to escape.

The little mermaid was sorely terrified, her heart beat quickly with fear, and she would have gone back, but she remembered the Prince and the human soul, and this gave her courage. So she wound her long floating hair around her head, that the polypi should not lay hold of it; then, crossing her hands over her breast, she darted like a fish

through the water between the monstrous polypi, which stretched their supple arms and fingers after her. She saw that everything within their grasp was held by a hundred arms as firmly as by iron bands; there were people who had been drowned, and had sunk to the bottom of the sea, looking like white skeletons, in the arms of the polypi; rudders, sea-chests, skeletons of land animals were held fast within their embrace; even a little mermaid, whom they had caught and strangled, and this to the little princess seemed most terrible of all.

Then she came to a large slimy place in the forest, where huge fat water-snakes were crawling about, showing their ugly yellow bodies. In the middle of this spot stood a house, built with the white bones of shipwrecked human beings; and there sat the sea-witch, a crab eating out of her mouth, just as we allow a canary-bird to eat a piece of sugar from our lips. The hideous water-snakes she called her little chickens, and she allowed them to crawl about her.

"I know exactly what you want," said the sea-witch; "it is very stupid of you, but you shall have your way, for it will bring you misfortune, my beautiful princess. You would like to get rid of your fish-tail, and instead of it, have two stumps to walk on, like the human beings, so that the young Prince may fall in love with you, and you may win him and an immortal soul;" and the witch laughed so loudly and horribly that the crab and the snakes fell to the ground, where they lay wriggling. "You have come just at the right time, for after sunrise to-morrow I should have been unable to help you for another year. I will make you

a potion, and before the sun rises you must swim with it to the shore, sit down on the beach, and drink it. Your fish-tail will then shrink and become what the people of earth call legs; but the change will be very painful, and you will feel as if you were being stabbed with a sharp sword. All who see you will say that you are the most beautiful child they have ever seen. You will still keep your graceful carriage; no dancer ever trod so lightly as you will, but every step you take will be as painful as if you were treading on daggers, which were drawing blood. If you choose to suffer all this, I will help you."

"Yes," said the little mermaid, in a trembling voice, and she thought of the Prince and the immortal soul.

"But remember," said the witch, "when once you have received a human form, you can never become a mermaid again; you can never dive down through the water to your sisters or to your father's palace, and if you do not succeed in winning the love of the Prince, so that for your sake he forgets father and mother, if he does not love you with all his heart and soul, and bid the priest to join your hands together so that you become man and wife, you can never receive an immortal soul. The day after he is married to another, your heart will break, and you will become nothing but foam on the sea."

"I am willing!" said the little mermaid, pale as death.

"But I must also be paid," said the witch, "and it is not a trifle that I shall ask of you: you have the most beautiful voice of all down here in the depths of the sea, and with this you think you will be able to charm the

Prince; but this voice you must give to me; the best thing you possess I must have for my costly draught. My own blood I must mix with it, that it may be as sharp as a two-edged sword."

"But when you take my voice," said the little mermaid, "what is left to me?"

"Your beautiful figure," said the witch, "your graceful carriage, and your eloquent eyes, and with these you can surely bewitch a man's heart. Well, have you lost your courage? Put out your little tongue so that I can cut it off in payment, and then I will give you the magic draught."

"Be it so," said the little mermaid, and the witch put her cauldron on the fire to make the magic potion.

"Cleanliness is a good thing," she said, and scoured the vessel with the snakes which she had twisted into a knot; then she scratched her bosom and caused her black blood to drip into it. The vapour took the most horrible shapes, enough to fill the beholder with terror. Every moment the witch cast new ingredients into the cauldron, and when it boiled up, there was a sound like the weeping of a crocodile. At last the draught was ready, and it looked like the purest water.

"Here it is," said the witch, and cut off the tongue of the little mermaid, who became thus unable either to speak or sing. "If the polypi should catch hold of you when you go back through the forest," said the witch, "you have only to throw one drop of this potion upon them, and their arms and fingers will break into a thousand pieces."

But this the mermaid had no need to do, for the polypi

shrank back when they saw the glittering draught shining in her hands like a twinkling star.

She soon passed through the forest, the marsh, and the rushing whirlpools, and again saw her father's palace. In the large ballroom the torches had burnt themselves out, and seemingly all were asleep, but she dared not go to see them, now that she was dumb, and was about to leave them for ever; she felt as if her heart would break with grief. She stole out into the garden, picked one single blossom from each of her sisters' flower-beds, blew a thousand kisses towards the palace, and then rose up through the deep blue sea.

The sun had not yet risen when she came in sight of the Prince's palace, and mounted the splendid marble steps; and the moon was shining brightly when the little maid drank the sharp burning draught. It was just as if a two-edged sword had been driven through her delicate body, and she fainted and lay as if dead. When she awoke the sun was shining over the water and she felt a sharp pain, but just before her stood the handsome young Prince. He looked at her with his beautiful black eyes, and she cast down her own, and then she saw that her fish-tail was gone, and that in its place she had the prettiest tiny white feet that any little girl could have, but she had nothing to cover her, so she wrapped herself in her long hair. The Prince asked her who she was, and whence she came, and she looked at him so sweetly, but oh! so sadly, with her deep blue eyes, for alas! she could not speak. He took her by the hand and led her to the palace, and at every step she felt as if she were walking on pointed needles or sharp

knives, just as the witch had told her; but this she willingly suffered. By the Prince's side she tripped along light as a bubble, and everyone wondered at her pretty, graceful movements. They dressed her in costly silk and muslin, and in the palace she was the most beautiful of them all; but she was dumb, and neither spoke nor sang. Beautiful slaves dressed in silver and gold stepped forward and sang to the Prince and his royal parents; one sang sweeter than all the others, and the Prince clapped his hands and smiled at her. This made the little mermaid quite sad, for she knew she could once have sung far more sweetly, and thought, "If only he could know that I have given away my voice for ever so that I might be with him!"

The slaves now performed pretty fairy-like dances to the sweetest music, and the little mermaid lifted up her lovely white arms, and on the tips of her toes glided over the floor, dancing as no one had ever danced before. With every movement her beauty became more striking, and her eyes spoke more eloquently to the heart than the songs of the slaves. All were charmed, especially the Prince, who called her his little foundling, and she danced again and again, though whenever her foot touched the floor it seemed as if she were treading on sharp knives. The Prince said she should always remain with him, and she was allowed to sleep on a velvet cushion placed outside his door. He had a page's dress made for her, so that she could follow him on horseback. They rode through sweet-scented woods where the green boughs swept her shoulders and the little birds sang among the green leaves. With the Prince she

climbed the lofty mountains, and although her delicate feet were bleeding so that all could see it, she only smiled, and followed him till they saw the clouds floating beneath them like a flock of birds travelling to foreign lands.

At home in the Prince's palace, when all were asleep at night, she went out on to the broad marble steps, and cooled her burning feet in the cold sea-water, thinking the while of those in the depths below. One night her sisters came up arm-in-arm. Mournfully they sang as they floated upon the water; she waved her hand to them, and they recognised her, and told her how unhappy she had made them all. Every night they paid her a visit; and once she saw far away the old grandmother, who for many a year had not been up to the surface of the sea, and the Sea-King with the crown on his head. They stretched their hands towards her, but dared not approach so near to the land as her sisters.

The Prince loved her more fondly day by day; he loved her as one loves a dear little child, but he never thought of making her his queen, and did not dream that if she were not, she could not win an immortal soul, but would become as foam on the sea on the day of his wedding with another.

"Do you not love me best of all?" the little mermaid's eyes seemed to say, when he took her in his arms and kissed her beautiful forehead.

"Yes, I love you most dearly," said the Prince, "for you have the best heart of them all; you are the most devoted to me, and are like a little maid whom I once



Every night her sisters paid her a visit. (P. 110.)

met, but whom I shall never see again. I was on a ship that was wrecked; the waves drove me to land near a holy temple, where young girls were performing the sacred rites. The youngest of them found me on the shore and saved my life; I saw her only twice, but she is the only one in the world I could love, and you are like her, and have almost driven her image from my mind. She belongs to the holy temple, and therefore my good fortune has sent you to me, and we will never part."

"Ah! he does not know that I saved his life," thought

the little mermaid. "I carried him over the sea away to the forest where the temple stands; I sat behind the foam and watched to see whether anyone would come to his aid; I saw the little maiden whom he loves more than me." And the mermaid sighed deeply, for she could not weep. "The little maiden belongs to the holy temple, he says; she will never come out into the world any more, and they will never meet. But I am with him, see him every day. I will take care of him, love him, give my life for him."

Now, it was rumoured that the Prince was about to marry the beautiful daughter of a neighbouring king; it was for this that a splendid ship was being fitted out; the Prince, it was announced, was travelling to pay a visit to the king's country, but everyone knew that he was really going to see the princess. A large suite was to go with him. The little mermaid shook her head and smiled; she knew the Prince's thoughts much better than all the others. "I must travel," he had said to her; "I must see this beautiful princess; my parents desire it, but they do not oblige me to bring her back home as my bride, and I cannot love her; she is not like the pretty maiden in the temple whom you resemble, and if ever I should choose a bride, I would sooner it were you, my dear dumb foundling, with your speaking eyes;" and he kissed her rosy lips, played with her long hair, and laid his head on her heart, while she dreamed of human happiness and an immortal soul.

"You are surely not afraid of the sea, my dear silent child?" he said, as they were standing on the magnificent

ship, which was taking him to the country of the neighbouring king. He told her of storm and calm, of the strange fish in the deep, and what the diver had seen there, and she smiled at his story; for she knew much better than anyone of earth the wonders at the bottom of the sea. At night the moon shone brightly, and when all were asleep except the man at the helm, she sat by the side of the ship and peered down through the clear water, and seemed to see her father's palace. On the top of the palace stood the old grandmother with the silver crown on her head, and gazed up through the waves towards the keel of the ship. Her sisters came up to the surface and looked at her, oh! so sadly, and wrung their white hands. She beckoned to them, smiled, and wanted to tell them how happy she was, but a cabin-boy approached, and the sisters dived below; and he thought that the white he had seen was the foam of the sea. The next morning the ship sailed into the harbour of the neighbouring king's beautiful city.

All the church bells were ringing, bugles sounded from the top of the high towers, while the soldiers down below stood in their ranks with glittering bayonets and flying colours. Every day was a festival, balls and entertainments followed one upon the other, but the princess had not yet appeared; she was being educated far away in a holy temple, where she had learned all the royal virtues. At last she came; the little mermaid was there, anxious to see whether she really was as beautiful as rumour said; and she could not but acknowledge that she had never seen a more lovely being. Her skin was so white and clear, and

behind her long black eyelashes smiled two faithful deep-blue eyes.

"It was you," said the Prince, "you, who saved me when I lay dying by the sea-shore," and he folded his blushing bride in his arms.

"Oh! I am too happy," he said to the little mermaid; "that which I wished for most, but never dared to hope for, has come to pass. You will rejoice at my happiness, for you love me best of all," and the little mermaid kissed his hand, but she felt as if her heart were breaking. His wedding morning would bring death to her, for she would become as foam upon the sea. All the bells were ringing, and the herald rode through the streets to proclaim the betrothal. On all the altars scented oil was burning in costly silver lamps; the priests swung the censers, the bride and the bridegroom joined their hands together and received the blessing of the bishop. The little mermaid stood in silk and gold, and held the bride's train, but her ears did not hear the festal music; her eyes did not see the holy ceremony; she thought only of the night of her death, and of what she had lost in this world. The very same evening the bride and bridegroom went on board; the cannon roared, flags were waving, and in the centre of the ship was the royal tent, made of gold and purple; the softest cushions were arranged for the bridal pair to sleep on in the calm, cool night. The sails were swelling in the wind, and the ship glided smoothly along over the clear sea. When it grew dark, coloured lamps were lit, and the crew danced merrily on deck. The little mermaid thought of the first time she

rose up to the surface of the sea, and saw all this joy and splendour; and she took part in the whirling dance, floating as the swallow does when he is pursued, and all cheered and admired her. She had never danced so beautifully before; her tender feet were cut as if by sharp knives, but she did not feel it, for a sharper pain pierced her heart. She knew that this was the last evening on which she should see him, for whom she had forsaken her kindred and her home, sacrificed her beautiful voice, and daily suffered infinite pain, of which he knew nothing. It was the last night that she would breathe the same air with him, behold the same deep blue sea, and the starry sky. An eternal night without dreams awaited her, for she had no soul, and could not win one.

The merrymaking continued until far past midnight. She smiled and danced with the thought of death in her heart. The Prince kissed his beautiful bride, and she played with his coal-black hair, and arm-in-arm they retired to rest within the gorgeous tent.

All was quiet and silent on the ship, the steersman stood at the helm, and the little mermaid laid her white arms on the railings and looked towards the east watching for the rosy dawn, the first beams of which she knew would kill her. Then she saw her sisters raise themselves up above the sea. They were as pale as she, but their long beautiful hair floated no more in the wind: it had been cut off. "We have given it to the witch," they said, "that we might help you, so that you need not die to-night. She has given us a knife: here it is—look how sharp it is.

Before the sun has risen you must thrust it in the Prince's heart, and when his warm blood drops on your feet they will grow together to a fish-tail, and you will become a mermaid again, and can dive down into the water with us and live your three hundred years, before you become as the salt sea-foam. Hasten, then; he or you must die before sunrise. Our old grandmother is so grieved that her white hair has fallen off, just as ours fell by the witch's scissors. Kill the Prince, and come back! Hasten! do you not see the rosy streak in the sky? In a few minutes the sun will rise, and you must die!" and they sighed deeply and sank beneath the waves.

The little mermaid drew the purple curtain from the tent, and saw the lovely bride sleeping with her head on the Prince's breast: she bowed down, kissed his noble forehead, and looked at the sky, where the dawn grew more and more bright; looked at the sharp knife, and then looked again at the Prince, who in his dream called his bride by name. She only was in his thoughts, and the knife trembled in the mermaid's hand; but she threw it far away out into the waves, which shone quite red where it fell, and the drops that spurted from the water looked like blood. Once more she cast a dying glance at the Prince; then she threw herself from the ship into the waves, where she felt that her body was dissolving into foam.

The sun rose from the waters; its warm rays fell on the cold sea-foam, and the little mermaid felt nothing of death. She saw the shining sun, and up above her were floating hundreds of beautiful beings. Through them she

could see the white sail of the ship and the rosy clouds of the sky. Their melodious voices were so ethereal that no human ear could hear them, just as no human eye could see the beings themselves, who were so light that they floated in the air without wings; and the little mermaid felt that she had a form like theirs, that she rose higher and higher above the foam.

"Where am I going?" she asked, and her voice sounded as that of the others, so ethereal that no earthly music could compare with it.

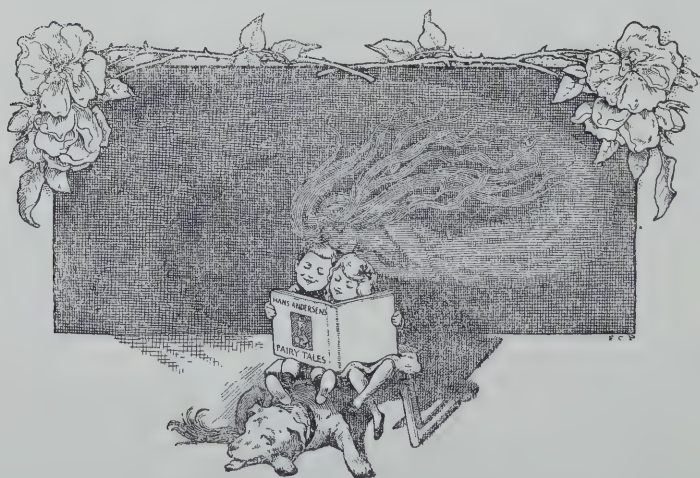
"To the daughters of the air," they answered. "A mermaid has no immortal soul, and can never obtain one unless she win a human being's love; her eternal existence is in the hands of another. The daughters of the air likewise have no immortal soul, but by good actions they may create one. We fly to the warm countries where the sultry air of pestilence destroys mankind; there we bring coolness, diffuse the perfume of flowers through the air, and send health and refreshment. When for three hundred years we have striven to do good, we receive an immortal soul, and take part in the eternal happiness of mankind. You, poor little mermaid, have striven with all your heart to do the same as we. By your sufferings and your endurance, you have raised yourself to the aerial world, by good actions you can in the space of three hundred years create an immortal soul."

The little mermaid raised her transparent eyes towards God's sun, and, for the first time, she shed tears.

On the ship all was life and noise. She saw the Prince

and his beautiful bride, who were sadly looking for her in the bubbling foam, as if they knew she had thrown herself into the waves. Unseen, she kissed the bridegroom's forehead, smiled upon him, and rose with the other children of the air to the rosy clouds that were floating in the wind. "In three hundred years we may float like this into the Kingdom of God."

"And maybe even sooner," whispered one. "Unseen, we float into the houses of men, where children are, and for every day that we find a good child who is the joy of his parents and deserves their love, God makes our time of probation shorter. The child does not know that we fly through the room, and that when we smile with joy at his goodness, a year is taken from the three hundred; but if we see a naughty or a wicked child, we shed tears of sorrow, and every tear adds a day to our time of trial."



THE WICKED PRINCE.

THERE was once a vain and wicked Prince, whose sole thought was to conquer every country in the world, and to inspire fear by his name alone. He went forth with fire and sword; his soldiers trampled down the corn in the fields, and set fire to the peasants' houses, so that the red flames licked the leaves from the trees and the fruit hung burnt from the black charred branches. Many a poor mother, with her naked baby in her arms, took refuge behind the smoking walls; but the soldiers searched for them, and if they succeeded in finding them, then began their demoniac fury; evil spirits could not have acted worse. But to the Prince it all seemed right; his power increased day by day, his name was feared by all, and fortune followed him in his evil acts.

From conquered villages he brought home gold and great treasures; and in his capital was massed a vaster amount of wealth than anywhere else in the world. He erected magnificent palaces, churches, and triumphal arches, and everyone who saw this splendour said: "What a great Prince!" They did not think of all the misery he had brought upon other countries, nor did they hear the sighs and groans that rose from the blackened ruins.

The Prince looked at his gold, and at his magnificent buildings, and thought, like the crowd: "What a great Prince am I! But," he said to himself, "I must have more—much more; no power must be compared with, no power must exceed, mine." And so he went out to make war against his neighbours, and conquered them all.

When he drove through the streets, he bound the captive kings with golden chains to his chariot, and during his banquets they had to lie at the feet of the Prince and his courtiers, and receive the crumbs of bread that were thrown to them.

The Prince caused his statue to be erected in the squares and in the royal palaces, and he even wished to place it in the churches, before the altars; but the priests said: "Prince, you are great, but God is greater; we dare it not."

"Then," said the wicked Prince, "I will conquer even Heaven;" and in the pride of his heart he caused a costly ship to be built, in which he could sail through the air. It was many-coloured, like a peacock's tail, and looked as if it were studded with a thousand eyes; but each eye was the muzzle of a gun. The Prince sat in the middle of the ship; he had only to press a spring, when a thousand bullets would fly out, and the guns would become charged again as before. Hundreds of mighty eagles were harnessed at the bow of the ship, and thus they flew up towards the sun.

The earth lay far beneath; at first it seemed, with its mountains and forests, like a ploughed field when the green peeps forth from the overturned turf; then it resembled a flat map, and at last it disappeared in mist and cloud.

Higher and higher flew the eagles; then God sent one of His many angels. The wicked Prince directed thousands of bullets against him, but they all fell back like hail from the angel's glittering wings; one drop of blood, one only, fell from the white feathers of his wings. But this drop fell on the ship in which the Prince sat; it burnt its way in, and, weighing like a thousand hundredweights of lead,



He drew his sword in anger, but only struck the empty air. (P. 122.)

dragged the ship headlong towards the earth. The strong pinions of the eagles broke, the wind roared round the Prince's head, and the clouds, formed of the smoke of burned cities, shaped themselves into threatening monsters, some like huge crabs, stretching their strong claws out towards him, others like rolling rocks, others again like dragons spitting fire.

The Prince lay half dead in the ship, which at last was caught by, and remained suspended in, the thick branches of the trees in the forest.

"I will conquer God," he said. "I have sworn it; my will must be done!" For seven years he caused magnificent ships to be built, with which he could sail through the air, had lightning rays forged from the hardest steel, for he intended to storm the fortress of Heaven.

From all his kingdoms he gathered armies so immense that when drawn up in rank and file they covered a surface of several square miles; they went on board the costly ships, and the Prince himself was approaching his own vessel, when God sent a swarm of gnats—only a little swarm of gnats. They buzzed round the Prince and settled on his face and hands; he drew his sword in anger, but only struck the empty air: the gnats he could not hit.

He then ordered costly hangings to be brought; these should be folded around him so that no gnats could touch him with their stings, and it was done as he commanded. But a single little gnat had attached itself to the inner side of the tapestry; it crept into the Prince's ear and stung him there.

It burned like fire, and the poison penetrated to his brain; he tore himself free from the hangings, rent his clothes to pieces, and danced naked before his rude, savage soldiers, who now jeered at the mad Prince—at him who had wished to conquer Heaven, and was himself vanquished by a single little gnat.

THE UGLY DUCKLING.

IT was beautiful out in the country, for it was summertime. The cornfields were yellow, the oats were green, the hay was put up in stacks in the meadows, and the stork strutted about on his long red legs and chattered Egyptian, for this was the language he had learned from his mother. All around the fields and meadows were great forests, and in the midst of these forests lay deep lakes. Yes, it was really beautiful out in the country! In the bright sunshine lay an old country-seat, surrounded by canals, and from the stone walls down to the water grew large burdocks, so high that under the tallest little children could stand upright. It was as wild a spot as the farthest depths of the forest; and here sat a duck on her nest. She had nearly hatched out her little ones, but she was growing tired, for it had taken her a long time, and she seldom received a visit. The other ducks preferred to swim about in the canals rather than run up to sit under the burdocks and gossip with her. At last one egg after the other began to crack, "Peep-peep!" they cried, for all the yolks had become living, and were popping their heads out.

"Quack! quack!" she said, and the little ones hurried

out as fast as they could, and went peering about under the green leaves. The mother let them look as much as they pleased, for green is good for the eyes.

"How large the world is!" said all the ducklings, for they had very much more room now than when they were lying in the egg-shells.

"Do you think that this is the whole world?" said the mother. "No, indeed; it stretches far away, right to the other side of the garden and into the parson's field; but I have never been there yet. I suppose you are all here?" she asked, getting up. "No, they are not all out: the biggest egg is still here; I wonder how long it is going to be?—I am getting tired of it," and then she sat down again.

"Well, how are you getting on?" said an old duck who came to pay her a visit.

"This egg takes such a long time," said the duck who was sitting. "It will not crack, but you should see all my little ducklings. They are the prettiest little mites that ever were seen—but they are all like their father—the good-for-nothing who never comes to see me."

"Let me see the egg that will not crack," said the old duck. "It may be a turkey's egg. I was once cheated in that way; and I had such a bother and worry with those young ones, for they were all frightened of the water. I could not get them to venture in. I quacked and clacked, but it was all in vain. Let me see the egg.—Yes; it must be a turkey's egg; you should leave it alone and teach the other children to swim."

"Well, I will just sit a little while longer on it," said

the duck; "I have been sitting so long, I may just as well sit out the regulation time of the Zoological Gardens."

"Just as you please," said the old duck, and away she went.

At last the large egg cracked. "Peep! peep!" said the young one, as he waddled out. Oh, how very large and ugly he was!

The duck looked at him.

"Well, this is a terribly big Duckling," she said; "none of the others look like him; can it really be a young turkey? Well, we shall soon see. Into the water he must go, even if I have to push him in myself."

The next day the weather was bright and beautiful, the sun was shining on all the huge burdocks, and the mother with the whole of her family went down to the canal. Splash! down she went into the water. "Quack! quack!" she said, and one duckling after the other tumbled in. The water went over their heads, but they soon came up again, and swam capitally, their legs seeming to move of themselves. They were all in the water, even the ugly grey Duckling.

"No, this is not a turkey," she said; "see how nicely he uses his legs, how gracefully he carries himself. He is my own child; in fact, he is rather handsome when you come to look at him. Quack! quack! now come along with me, and I will take you out into the world, and introduce you to the poultry-yard; but keep near me, so that no one may tread on you; and—mind the cat!"

And so they came into the poultry-yard. There was

a terrible to-do in the yard, for two families were fighting about an eel's head, and the cat got it after all. "That is the way of the world," said the mother duck, whetting her beak, for she also wanted the eel's head. "And now use your legs, and let me see that you can bustle about, and make a nice bow with your necks to the old duck yonder. She is the most aristocratic of all the fowls present; she is of Spanish blood; that is why she is so fat, and has a red rag round one leg. That is something very extraordinary—indeed, the greatest distinction that a duck can receive. It means that they would not lose her on any account, and that she shall be recognised by man and beast. Now hurry up; don't put your legs together—a well-trained duckling puts its legs far away from each other, just like father and mother—that is the way! Now bend your neck and say 'quack.'"

And so they did, but all the other ducks in the yard looked at them, and said quite distinctly: "Well, now we are going to have this new lot, too—as if there were not enough of us already. Oh! look at that ugly Duckling—we won't stand him!" And one of the ducks flew at him and bit him on the back of the head.

"Let him alone," said his mother; "he is not doing any harm to anyone."

"But he is so big and uncommon," said the duck that had bitten him; "so he must be knocked about a little."

"Those children of yours are very pretty, mother," said the old duck with the red rag round her leg. "They are all pretty, except one; he is a failure, and I wish you could re-make him."

"That is impossible, your highness," said the mother duck; "he is not pretty, but he has a very good temper, and he swims beautifully, quite as well as any of the others—indeed, I may say even better. I daresay he will grow handsome in time, and no doubt he will get smaller. He has been lying too long in the egg; that is why his shape is not quite right." So she scratched his neck and stroked him all over. "Besides, he is a drake," she said, "and therefore it doesn't much matter. I think he will be very sturdy; he will get along very well."

"The other ducklings are pretty enough," said the old duck; "just make yourself at home, and if you find an eel's head, you may bring it to me."

So they made themselves at home; but the poor Duckling that came out of the last egg, and looked so ugly, was beaten, knocked about, and sneered at both by the ducks and the fowls. "He is too big," they all said, and the turkey-cock, who was born with spurs, and therefore thought himself an emperor, puffed himself out like a ship in full sail, and went straight up to the Duckling and gobbled until he was quite red in the face. The poor Duckling did not know whether to stand still or walk away. He felt quite miserable, because he was so ugly, and was the butt of the whole poultry-yard.

Thus the first day went by, and afterwards it became worse and worse. The poor duckling was driven about by everyone; even his brothers and sisters were angry with him, and said frequently: "If only the cat would take you, you silly thing!" And the mother duck said: "If only you

were far away!" And the ducks bit him, and the chickens pecked at him, and the girl who fed the poultry kicked at him with her foot. One day he flew over the fence, and even the little birds in the bush were frightened away. "It is because I am so ugly," thought the Duckling, and he shut his eyes; but he ran on all the same, until he came to the big moor where the wild ducks lived. Here he lay all night, feeling very tired and miserable. In the morning the wild ducks flew up and looked at their new companion.

"Where do you come from?" they asked, and the Duckling turned in all directions, and bowed to them as well as he could. "You are uncommonly ugly," said the wild ducks, "but that is all the same to us, so long as you don't marry into our family."

Poor thing! he had no thought of getting married; if only they would allow him to lie in the rushes and drink a little of the marsh water.

Here he lay for two whole days, and then came two wild geese, or rather wild ganders. They had not been long out of the egg, and that is why they were so impertinent.

"Look here," they said, "you are so ugly that we have taken a fancy to you. Would you like to come along with us and become a bird-of-passage? On the next moor, not so very far from here, there are some lovely wild geese, all unmarried, and they can all say 'hiss! hiss!' Although you are so ugly, it would be a chance of making your fortune."

Bang! bang! sounded in the air; the two ganders fell down amongst the rushes, and the water became blood-red.



Towards evening he reached a humble cottage. (P. 130.)

Again came the sound—bang! bang! and the whole flock of wild geese flew up from the reeds. Then there was another report. It was a large shooting party, and the sportsmen were lying all round the moor, while some of them were sitting on the branches of trees that overhung the rushes. The blue smoke rose in clouds through the dark trees and floated away across the water.

Down came the dogs in the mud—splash! splash! Reeds and rushes were bent down on all sides, and the poor duckling was terribly frightened. He turned his head round to hide it under his wing, but just at that moment a huge dog stood before him, his tongue hanging out of his mouth and a horrible glare in his eyes. He thrust his nose close to the duckling, showing his sharp teeth, and then splash! away he went without touching him. “Oh! Heaven be thanked!” sighed the poor duckling; “I am so ugly that even the dog would not bite me”; and he lay quite still, while the shots were whizzing among the reeds, for the sportsmen fired again and again.

It was late in the day before things began to get quiet, but the poor duckling did not dare to move. He waited for several hours before he began to look around, and then he hurried away from the moor as fast as he could. Over fields and meadows he ran, but as it was windy it was difficult for him to get along. Towards evening he reached a humble little cottage; it was so dilapidated that it did not know on which side to fall, and therefore it continued to stand up.

The wind was whistling around the Duckling, and he was obliged to sit down in order not to be blown away. The weather was getting worse and worse, when he suddenly noticed that the door of the cottage had broken away from one of its hinges, and hung so crookedly that he could just creep through the crack into the room, and this he did.

Here lived an old woman with her Cat and her Hen.

The Cat, which she called Sonny, could arch his back, and purr, and could even give out sparks, but only when you stroked him the wrong way. The Hen had small stumpy legs, and therefore they called her Chick-a-biddy Shortshanks. She laid plenty of eggs, and the old woman loved her as her own child.

In the morning the strange Duckling was at once discovered, and the Cat began to purr and the Hen to cackle.

"What is the matter?" said the old woman, peering around, and as she did not see well, she thought that the Duckling was a fat duck that had gone astray. "This is a capital find," she thought; "now I shall have duck's eggs, if only it is not a drake—but that we must find out." So the Duckling was put on a trial for three weeks, but no eggs came.

The Cat was master of the house and the Hen was mistress, and so they always said: "We and the world;" for they considered that they were half the world, and the better half. The Duckling thought that others might have a different opinion, but the Hen would not agree with this. "Can you lay eggs?" she asked. "No—well, then, you will have to hold your tongue."

And the Cat said: "Can you arch your back, or purr, or give out sparks? No—well, then, you must not have an opinion when other people talk"; and the Duckling sat in a corner in a bad temper. Then he began to think of the fresh air and the sunshine, and felt a strange longing to fly out over the water. At last he could keep it to himself no longer: he had to tell the Hen about it.

"What is the matter with you?" she said; "you have nothing to do—that is why you get such fancies into your head. If you could lay an egg, or purr, it would be all right."

"But it is so lovely to swim on the water," said the Duckling, "so nice to feel the water close over your head when you plunge down to the bottom!"

"A real pleasure that must be!" said the Hen; "you are certainly going mad! Just ask the Cat, who is the wisest person I know, if *he* likes to float on the water or plunge below—I say nothing of my own opinion. Or ask our mistress, the old woman—there is not a wiser old woman in the world—do you think that *she* would like to float on the water or feel it closing over her head?"

"You don't understand me," said the Duckling.

"Well, if *we* don't understand you, I should like to know who would. You don't mean to say that you are wiser than the Cat and the old woman, not to mention myself? Don't make a fool of yourself, child; and thank your Creator for all the good that He has done for you. Have you not got into a warm room, and into good company, from which you can learn something? You are a mere chatterbox; your company is not agreeable. I speak for your good, in telling you these unpleasant truths; by that you may know your true friends. See that you learn how to lay eggs, and how to purr, and give out sparks."

"I think I will go out into the wide world," said the Duckling.

"Yes, do!" said the Hen. So the Duckling went. He

floated on the water, and dived beneath, but he was avoided by all other animals, because of his ugliness.

Autumn came, the leaves in the forest turned yellow and brown, and the wind took hold of them and made them dance about. Up in the air it looked very cold; the clouds were heavy with hail and snow, and on the stone wall stood a raven, shivering, and crying, "Croak! croak!" Yes, the mere thought of it was enough to make one feel cold, and the poor Duckling certainly had not a very good time.

One evening, as the sun was setting, a whole flight of beautiful great birds rose out of the bushes. The Duckling had never seen anything so pretty as these birds, which were shining white, and had long, slender necks. They were swans, and they uttered a peculiar cry as they spread their magnificent broad wings and flew away from these cold regions to warmer climes, across the wide seas. They rose high, very high, in the air, and the ugly Duckling felt quite a strange sensation as he watched them.

He whirled round and round in the water like a wheel, stretched his neck after them high up in the air, and uttered a cry, so loud and strange that he frightened himself.

Ah! he could not forget those beautiful birds, those happy birds, and when he could no longer see them, he dived right to the bottom, so that when he came up again he was nearly out of breath. He did not know the name of the birds, nor whither they were flying, yet he loved them as he had never loved anyone else. He did not envy them; how could he think of wishing himself so beautiful?

He would have been glad if only the ducks had endured him in their company—poor, ugly thing that he was!

And the winter grew very cold! The duckling had to swim about in the water so as to keep himself from freezing, and every night the hole in which he was swimming became smaller and smaller. It was freezing so hard that the ice cracked; and the duckling had to move his legs constantly to and fro to prevent the water from freezing up altogether. At last he became exhausted, and lay quite still, and so he froze fast into the ice.

Early in the morning a peasant came along and saw him. He went out to the duckling, knocked a hole in the ice with his wooden shoe, and took him home to his wife.

Here he was brought to life again. The children wanted to play with him, but the Duckling thought they might hurt him, and in his fright he flew into the milk-basin, and the milk was spilt all over the floor. The woman screamed and threw her hands up in the air; then he flew down into the butter-tub, from there to the meal-barrel, and out again. What a state he was in! The woman screamed and struck at him with the fire-irons, the children tumbled over one another in trying to catch the poor Duckling, and they laughed and shouted. Luckily the door was open, and out he flew through the bushes, down on to the newly fallen snow, where he lay quite exhausted. It would, however, be too sad a story to tell of all the want and misery he suffered during that hard winter.

One day, as he was lying on the moor among the

rushes, the sun again began to shine warmly; the larks were singing; the beautiful spring had come!

All at once he lifted his wings: they beat the air more strongly than before, and bore him easily aloft. Before he knew what had happened, he found himself in a large garden



Suddenly through the thicket came three beautiful swans. (P. 135.)

where the apple-trees stood in bloom, and where sweet-scented clusters of lilac hung on the long green boughs, bending down towards the winding river. It was delightful here, on this beautiful spring day; and suddenly through the thicket came three beautiful white swans. They preened their feathers, and floated gently on the water. The Duckling

recognised the beautiful creatures, and was overcome by a strange feeling of sadness.

"I will fly over to them, those royal birds, and they will kill me, because I, who am so ugly, dare to approach them. But after all, it is better to be killed by them than to be bitten by the ducks, pecked by the chickens, kicked by the maid who looks after the poultry-yard, and suffer misery in the winter." So he flew down into the water and swam towards the beautiful swans. They looked at him, and drifted towards him, with outspread wings.

"Kill me!" said the poor creature, and bent his head down towards the surface of the water, awaiting death. But what did he see in the clear water? He saw his own image, but he was no longer a clumsy, dark grey bird, ugly and hateful; he was himself a swan! It does not matter if one is brought up among the ducks so long as one is hatched from a swan's egg. He felt quite glad that he had gone through all this want and misery; for he could now realise all the happiness that greeted him.

The large swans swam round him and stroked him with their beaks. Into the garden came some little children. They threw bread and corn into the water, and the smallest of them cried: "There is a new one!" and the other children shouted joyously: "Yes, a new one has arrived;" and they clapped their hands, and danced round and round their father and mother, throwing bread-crumbs and biscuits into the river.

"The new one is the prettiest," they said; "he is so young and so lovely." And the old swans bowed to him;

but he felt so bashful that he stuck his head between his wings; he did not know what was the matter; he was too happy, but not at all proud, for a good heart never becomes proud. He thought of how he had been persecuted and despised, and now he heard them all say that he was the prettiest, the most beautiful of birds.

And the lilac bowed down its branches to him, and the sun shone warm and bright. Then he rustled his feathers, curved his slender neck, and cried joyfully from the depths of his heart: "I never dreamed of so much happiness when I was only The Ugly Duckling!"

THE DARNING-NEEDLE.

THERE was once a Darning-Needle who was so conceited that she imagined herself a sewing-needle.

"Now be careful, and hold me tight," said the Darning-Needle to the fingers, when they took her up. "Don't drop me, for if I fall on the floor, I may never be found again, so fine am I."

"Don't talk nonsense," said the fingers, holding her tightly round the waist.

"Look at me: I have a train," said the Darning-Needle, and she drew a long thread after her, but it had no knots upon it.

The fingers directed the Needle at the cook's slipper, of which the upper leather had burst, and had now to be sewn up.

"This is an unpleasant job," said the Darning-Needle; "I shall never get through it; I shall break"; and she broke. "There! I told you so," said the Darning-Needle; "I am too fine."

"Now it's good for nothing," thought the fingers; but they were still obliged to hold it fast, for the cook dropped some sealing-wax on the Needle, and stuck it in front of her shawl.

"Well, now I am a breast-pin," said the Darning-Needle. "I knew I should come to honour; if one is some-

body one must always come to something," and she laughed to herself, for you can never see from the outside when a Darning-Needle is laughing. There she was, sitting as proudly as if she were driving in a carriage and looking about her on all sides.

"May I have the honour of asking if you are of gold?" she inquired of the pin who was her neighbour. "You have a very fine appearance, and a head of your own, although it *is* somewhat small. You had better see to it that it grows, for it is not everyone that can get sealing-wax dropped upon him."

And the Darning-Needle drew herself up so far that she fell out of the shawl down into the sink, just as the cook was rinsing it.

"Now we are going on a journey," said the Darning-Needle; "I hope I shall not get lost." But she did get lost. "I am too fine for this world," she said, when she was sitting in the gutter. "But I know who I am, and that is always a comfort." So she carried herself more upright than ever, and did not lose her good humour, although all sorts of things went sailing over her—bits of wood, straws, and pieces of newspaper.

"Look how they are sailing!" said the Darning-Needle; "they don't know what is sticking underneath them! I am sitting here. Now here comes a chip, thinking of nothing in the world but itself, which is only wood; there floats a straw; just look how it is swaying, see how it turns; don't think so much of yourself: you might hurt yourself against the curb; there floats a newspaper—what is printed on it

is all forgotten, and yet it gives itself airs, while I am sitting patient and quiet. I am what I am, and I know it."

One day, something glittered so prettily close by that the Darning-Needle thought it was a diamond; but it was a piece of glass from a bottle. However, because it was glittering the Darning-Needle spoke to it, and introduced herself as a breast-pin.

"I take it you are a diamond?"

"Well, I am something in that line."

So each thought that the other was really costly, and they discussed the conceit of the world at large.

"I have lived in a casket that belonged to a servant," said the Darning-Needle, "and the servant was a cook. She had five fingers on each hand, and anything more conceited than those five fingers I have never known. After all, they were only made to hold me, to take me out of the casket, and put me back again."

"Did they glitter?" said the bit of glass.

"Glitter!" said the Darning-Needle; "no, but they were haughty all the same. There were five brothers, all of the finger family; and they held themselves proudly one beside the other, although they were of different lengths. The outermost, 'Thumbling,' was short and fat, and walked outside the ranks; he had but one joint in his back, and could only make a single bow, but he declared that if he were cut off a man, that person would be useless for service in war. 'Sweet-tooth' thrust himself into sweet and sour, and pointed to sun and moon: it was he who pressed the pen when the fingers wrote; 'Longman' looked over the

heads of all the others; 'Goldband' went with a golden ring round his waist; but little 'Peter Fiddler' did not do anything, and was very proud of it. It was all brag from first to last; that was why I went into the sink."

"And here we sit and glitter," said the piece of glass. At that very moment some more water came into the



The boys stuck the Darning-Needle in the shell. (P. 142.)

gutter, overflowed the sides, and carried the bit of glass away with it.

"So he also is gone," said the Darning-Needle; "I remain here. I am too fine; but that is my pride, and my pride is honourable." So she sat upright, and thought of many things. "I could almost believe that I had been born a sunbeam, so fine am I, and it seems as if the sunbeams

were looking for me under the water. I am so fine that my mother could not find me; if only I had my old eye that broke I believe I could weep, but I would not do that, for it is not distinguished to cry."

One day, some street boys were grubbing in the gutter, where they sometimes found old nails, coppers, and similar things. It was dirty work, but it amused them. "Oh," cried one, who had pricked himself with the Darning-Needle, "here's a fellow for you."

"I am not a fellow—I am a miss," said the Darning-Needle, but nobody heard it. The sealing-wax had dropped off, and the Needle had turned quite black; but black makes one look thinner, so she thought she was finer than before.

"Here comes an egg-shell," said the boys, and they stuck the Darning-Needle in the shell.

"The walls are white, and I am black myself," said the Darning-Needle. "That is very becoming, for now people can see me. I only hope I shall not be sea-sick, or I shall break again." But she was not sea-sick at all, so she did not break. "It is a good safeguard against sea-sickness to have a steel stomach, and to remember that one is a little above the ordinary. Now my trouble is over; the finer one is, the more one can bear."

"Crack!" went the egg-shell, as a wagon went over it.

"Oh! how it crushes me," said the Darning-Needle; "now I shall be sea-sick. I am breaking! I am breaking!"

But she did not break, although the wagon went over her. She lay at full length; and there she may lie.

THE FIR TREE.

OUT in the forest grew a pretty little Fir Tree. It had a good situation, for it stood well in the sunlight, and had sufficient air, while all around were many larger companions, both pines and firs. But the little Fir Tree was so busy with growing that it did not think of the warm sun and the fresh air; nor did it take any notice of the peasant children who roamed about and chattered while they gathered strawberries or raspberries. They would often come with a whole potful, or with the fruit strung upon a straw, and, sitting down beside the little Tree, would say: "Oh! what a very pretty little Tree this is!" But the Fir Tree was not at all pleased to hear this.

The next year it grew one long joint taller, and the year after it had grown yet another, for on a Fir Tree you can always see by the number of rings how many years it has lived.

"Ah! if only I were as tall a tree as the others," sighed the little Fir; "I could then spread my branches far around, and look out from the top of my crown over the wide world. Birds would come and nestle between my boughs, and when the wind blew I could nod just as proudly as the rest."

It took no pleasure in the sunshine, nor in the birds,

nor in the rosy clouds that morning and evening went floating past.

In the winter-time, when all around the snow lay dazzlingly white, a hare would now and then come running along and jump right over the little Tree. How ashamed the Fir Tree was! But two winters went by, and when the third year came, the Tree was so big that the hare had to go round it.

"Oh! to grow, to grow, to be large, to be tall, to be old—that is the only desirable thing in the world," thought the Tree.

In the autumn the wood-cutters came and felled some of the tallest trees. This happened every year, and the young Fir, which was now beginning to be grown up, trembled as its huge companions fell with a crash to the ground. Their branches were cut away, and they looked quite naked, long, and slender—indeed, it was nearly impossible to recognise them. Then they were placed on carts, and horses hauled them away out of the forest. To what place were they going? What was to become of them?

When, in the spring, the Swallow and the Stork came, the Tree said to them: "Do you not know to what place they are taken? Have you not met them?"

The Swallow knew nothing about it; but the Stork looked thoughtful, nodded its head, and said: "Yes, I think I know; I met many ships when I flew away from Egypt, and on the ships were magnificent masts. These, I think, were the trees, for they smelt of pine. They were very stately, I can assure you."



A hare would now and then jump right over the little tree. (P. 144.)

"If only I were tall enough to fly away over the sea! What is it—the sea; and how does it really look?"

"Well, that would take rather a long time to explain," said the Stork, and he went away.

"Rejoice while you are young," said the Sunbeams. "Rejoice in your fresh growth, and in the young life that is in you." And the wind kissed the Fir Tree, the dew shed tears over it; but this the Tree did not understand.

When Christmas-time approached, many young trees were felled—trees that were not even as tall or old as our Fir Tree, which never felt any rest, but was always wishing to get away. These young trees—and they were just the prettiest of all—were allowed to keep their branches; they

were laid on wagons, and the horses hauled them out of the forest. "Whither are they going?" asked the Fir Tree. "They are not taller than I—in fact, there was one that was much smaller. Why are they allowed to keep all their branches? To what place are they taken?"

"We know," chirped the Sparrows; "down in the town we have peeped in through the window-panes: we know where they go. They are honoured with the greatest splendour and pomp that you can imagine! We have peeped in through the window, and seen them planted in the middle of the warm room, and dressed with the most beautiful things—gilded apples, ginger-cakes, toys, and hundreds of candles."

"And then," said the Fir Tree, while every branch trembled, "and then what happens?"

"We have not seen any more, but what we did see was marvellous."

"I wonder whether I have been born to tread this glorious path," cried the Fir Tree, full of joy. "It would be even better than crossing the seas. I am weary with longing. How I wish it were Christmas now; I am quite as tall and well-grown as the others that were taken away last year. Ah! if only I were already on the wagon—if I were in the warm room, surrounded by all that pomp and splendour! And then—yes—something even better will happen—something even more charming—or why should they adorn me so? There must certainly be something even more delightful still—but what is it? Oh! how I long for it! I scarcely know what is the matter with me."

“Rejoice with us,” said the Air and the Sunshine; “rejoice in your fresh youth out under the bright sky.” But it would not rejoice, although it grew taller and taller. Winter and summer it stood there in its dark green foliage. Everybody who saw it said: “This is a beautiful tree!” and at Christmas it was felled the first of all. The axe cut deep through the sap, and the Tree fell with a sigh to the earth. It felt a sensation of faintness, and could not even think of its happiness. Now it was sad at parting from home—from the spot where it had grown. It knew that it would see the dear old companions no more, nor the little bushes and flowers that grew around; nor, perhaps, the birds. The parting and the journey were, indeed, by no means pleasant.

The Tree did not recover until it was unloaded with other trees in the yard. It heard a man say: “This is a beautiful tree; we shall only want this one.” Then came two servants in full livery and carried the Fir Tree into a large and beautiful hall. Portraits hung upon the walls, and by the huge fireplace stood china vases, with lions on the covers. There were rocking-chairs, silk-covered sofas, and large tables covered with picture-books worth hundreds and hundreds of pounds—at least, the children said so. The Fir Tree was put into a big tub filled with sand; but nobody could see that it was a tub, for it was draped with foliage and placed on a large carpet of many colours. Oh! how the Tree trembled. What was going to happen? Both the servants and the young ladies began to decorate the Tree. On one branch they hung small nets cut out of

coloured paper, and each net was filled with sweetmeats; on others were gilded apples and walnuts, looking just as if they had grown there. More than a hundred little candles, red, blue, and white, were fastened to the branches; dolls as real as life—the Tree had never seen such things before—were standing amongst the foliage; and high up at the top shone a great star of tinsel gold—it was splendid; it was simply magnificent!

“This evening,” they all said, “this evening it will shine.”

“Ah!” thought the Tree, “how I wish it were evening already—if only the candles were lit; but what will happen then? I wonder if the trees from the forest will come to look at me; I wonder if the Sparrows will fly against the pane; shall I grow fast here; or stand thus adorned through winter and summer?” Well, at last, it knew all about it; but it had real barkache from mere longing, and barkache is as bad for a tree as headache for a human being.

At last the candles were lit. How beautiful! how brilliant it was! And the Tree trembled in all its branches, so that one of the candles set fire to a green twig, and this was really painful. “Oh, dear! oh, dear!” cried the young ladies, putting out the fire as quickly as possible. After this the Tree did not even dare to tremble. It was quite terrified—so much afraid indeed of burning some of its ornaments, that it was dazed in the midst of all its splendour.

All at once, the folding-doors were thrown open, and a number of children rushed in as if they intended to overturn the whole Tree. The elders followed more slowly. The little ones stood silent with astonishment, but only for

a moment; then they shouted till the room rang, and danced round the Tree, while one present after another was plucked from its branches.

"What are they doing?" thought the Tree; "what is going to happen?" The candles burned down to the twigs, and one after the other they were put out. Then the children were allowed to rifle the Tree. How they rushed at it, so that every branch cracked again; if the top and the tinsel star had not been fastened to the ceiling, the whole Tree would have fallen over! The children danced about with their pretty toys; no one paid any attention to the Tree except an old nurse, who peered through the branches, and that was only to see whether a fig or an apple had been forgotten.

"A story! a story!" cried the children, drawing a fat little man towards the Tree. He sat down just underneath it. "Here we shall be in the green country," he said, "and the Tree will have the advantage of listening to my story; but I am only going to tell you one. Would you like to hear the history of Ivede Avede, or would you rather hear of Humpty-Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and yet was raised to honour and married the princess?"

"Ivede Avede!" cried some; "Humpty-Dumpty!" cried others; what a screaming there was! Only the Christmas Tree stood silent and pensive. "And am I to do nothing?" it thought; but it had already done all that it was expected to do.

So the man told the story of Humpty-Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and yet came to honour and married the

princess; and the children clapped their hands, and cried: "Tell us another! tell us another!" For they wanted Ivede Avede as well, but they only got the one about Humpty-Dumpty. The Christmas Tree stood quiet and pensive. The birds in the forest had never told a story such as that in which Humpty-Dumpty fell downstairs and yet married the princess.

"Well, that is the way of the world," thought the Christmas Tree, and it quite believed that the story was true, because the man who told it seemed so very nice.

"Well, who knows," it thought; "perhaps I too shall fall downstairs and marry a princess." Meanwhile, it rejoiced to think that it would be decked out the same way next day, with candles, and toys, gold, and fruit. "To-morrow I will not tremble," it said to itself; "I will enjoy my grandeur. To-morrow I shall hear the story of Humpty-Dumpty again, and perhaps Ivede Avede as well;" and the Tree stood quiet and pensive throughout the whole night.

The next morning the man-servant and a maid came in. "Now the fun will start again," thought the Tree; but they dragged it out of the room, up the stairs, and into the attic; and there it was put away in a dark corner where no daylight could reach it.

"What does this mean?" thought the Tree; "what am I going to do here; what can I hear up here?" and it leant against the wall, and thought, and thought. And plenty of time it had to think, for although days and nights went by, nobody came up to the attic, and when at last somebody came, it was only to put away some big boxes in the corner.

The Tree was now quite hidden, and it appeared to be quite forgotten. "Well, it is winter outdoors," it thought; "the earth is hard, and covered with snow, and the people cannot plant me now; I shall, therefore, have to stand here until the spring. How considerate that is! How kind people really are! If only it were not so dark here, and so fearfully lonely; there is not even a little hare. It was really nice out in the forest, when the ground was covered with snow, and the hare ran by. Yes, even when he jumped over me, although at the time I did not like it. Up here it is terribly lonely."

"Peep, peep," said a little Mouse, as it crept forth. Then came another, which sniffed at the Fir Tree and slipped in amongst its branches. "It is awfully cold," said the little Mouse, "or else it would be very nice in here. Don't you think so, old Fir Tree?"

"I am not at all old," said the Fir Tree; "there are many much older than I."

"Where do you come from?" asked the Mouse, "and what do you know?" They were terribly inquisitive. "Now tell us about the most beautiful spot on earth—have you been there? Have you been into the pantry, where cheese is lying on the shelves, and the hams are hanging from the ceiling, where one dances on tallow-candles—where one goes in thin and comes out fat?"

"I don't know about that," said the Tree, "but I know the forest, where the sun shines and the birds sing," and then it told its whole history from youth upwards.

The little Mice had never heard of such things

before, and they listened and said: "Oh! how many things you have seen! how happy you have been!"

"I?" said the Fir Tree, and it thought over what it had said. "Well, as a matter of fact, it *was* rather jolly at times." And then it told about the Christmas Eve, when it was dressed with cakes and candles.

"Ah!" said the little Mice, "you have indeed been happy, old Fir Tree."

"I am not at all old," said the Tree; "it was only this winter that I came from the forest. I am in the prime of life, and am only stunted in my growth."

"What nice tales he can tell!" said the little Mice.

And the next night four more little Mice came in to hear the Fir Tree's stories, and the more it told the better it remembered everything, and began to think they had been very jolly times! But they might come again, for did not Humpty-Dumpty fall downstairs and yet marry the princess?

"Perhaps," it said to itself, "I also may marry a princess"; and the Fir Tree thought of the pretty little Birch Tree that grew out in the forest, for the Birch was to the Fir Tree a real little princess.

"Who is Humpty-Dumpty?" asked the little Mice. And the Tree told them the fairy tale from beginning to end. It remembered every single word, and the little Mice were ready to run up to the top of the Tree for pure joy. Next night a great many more Mice came in, and on Sunday two Rats; but in their opinion the story was not funny. The little Mice were very sorry for this, and they, too, began to think less of it.

"Do you know only that one story?" asked the Rats.

"Only that one," said the Tree. "It was the story I heard on my happiest, happiest evening; but I did not know then how happy I was."

"It is a very poor story. Don't you know anything about bacon or tallow candles—do you know no pantry stories?"

"No," said the Tree.

"Well, then, we don't want to hear you," said the Rats; so they went home.

At last the little Mice also went home, and the Tree sighed.

"It was very nice when those merry little Mice were sitting around me, listening to what I told them. Now that also is past, but I shall know how to amuse myself when I am taken out again."

But when did this happen? Well, one morning some people came and rummaged about in the garret; the boxes were moved, and the Tree was taken out; they threw it rather roughly on the floor, but soon a man dragged it down towards the staircase, where the daylight shone in. "Now life begins again," thought the Tree, as it felt the fresh air and the first sunbeam. Then it found itself out in the yard; but all this happened so quickly that the Tree altogether forgot to look at itself—there was so much to see all round it. The yard adjoined the garden, where everything was in bloom; roses, fresh and fragrant, hung over the little paling, the linden-trees were blooming, and the Swallows flew about and cried: "Tweet, tweet! my

husband has come." But it was not the Fir Tree that they meant.

"Now I am going to live," cried the Fir Tree joyously, and it spread out its branches; but lo! they were all withered and yellow, and it lay in a corner amongst weeds and nettles. The tinsel star still stuck at the top of the Tree, glittering in the bright sunshine.

In the yard two merry children were playing. They had danced round the tree at Christmas-time, and greatly enjoyed themselves. The smaller of the two ran up and tore off the tinsel star. "Look what is still sticking to that ugly old Christmas Tree!" he said, and trod on the branches so that they cracked under his boots.

The Tree looked at all the beauty of the flowers and the freshness of the garden; then it looked at itself, and wished that it had been left in its dark corner in the garret. It thought of its fresh youth in the forest, of the merry Christmas Eve, and of the little Mice that were so glad to listen to the story of Humpty-Dumpty.

"All is over! all is over!" said the poor Tree; "if only I had enjoyed myself when I could have done so! But it is all over now!" And the man-servant came and chopped the Tree up into little pieces, until there was a whole bundle of it. It blazed brightly under the great copper, and it sighed deeply, every sigh sounding like a tiny pistol-shot. The children who were playing came in and sat down in front of the fire, looked into it, and cried: "Piff! paff!" but at each shot there was a deep sigh. It was the Tree, thinking of the summer day in the wood, of the winter night

when the stars were shining, of the Christmas Eve, and of Humpty-Dumpty, and the only fairy tale it had ever heard, or could tell.

And so the Tree was burned to ashes. The children played in the yard, and the little one pinned on his breast the tinsel star which the Tree had worn on its happiest evening.

Now it was all over—the Tree was gone, and the story with it. And this is the way of all stories.

THE TOP AND BALL.

A TOP and a Ball lay together in a drawer among some other toys. The Top said to the Ball: "Why should we not become engaged, as we are lying here in the same drawer?" But the Ball, which was covered with morocco leather, and was just as conceited as a fine young lady could be, would make no reply to such nonsense.

The next day the little boy to whom the toys belonged painted the Top all over in red and yellow, and drove a brass nail into the centre. This looked capital when the Top spun round.

"Just look at me!" he said to the Ball; "what do you think now? Ought we not to become engaged? We should be a perfect match, for you jump and I dance—there would be no happier couple than we two."

"Do you think so, indeed?" said the Ball. "Perhaps you are not aware that my father and mother were morocco slippers, and that I have a cork in my body!"

"Yes, but I am made of mahogany," said the Top. "The mayor himself turned me, for he has a turning-lathe of his own; he finds it a very pleasant amusement."

"Is that really the fact?" asked the Ball.

"May I never be whipped again if I do not tell the truth," replied the Top.

"You certainly urge your suit very well," said the Ball; "but I cannot accept you, for I am as good as half engaged to the Swallow. Whenever I fly up into the air,



Whenever I fly into the air, the Swallow says, "Will you? Will you?"

(P. 157.)

he puts his head out of the nest, and says, 'Will you? will you?' and I have said, 'Yes' to myself, and that is *half* as good as being engaged; but I will promise never to forget you."

"Much good that will be!" said the Top, and they spoke no more to one another.

The next day the Ball was taken out, and the Top saw her flying high up into the air, just like a bird, until at last one could hardly see her. Whenever she returned to the earth she gave another high leap as she touched the ground, either because she longed to soar, or because she had a cork in her body. But at the ninth time the Ball did not return at all, and although the boy hunted and hunted for her, he could not find her—she was lost.

"I know where she is," sighed the Top; "she is in the Swallow's nest; she has married the Swallow."

The more the Top thought of this the more deeply he fell in love with the Ball. Just because he could not get the Ball, his love grew stronger and stronger; but the worst thought of all was that the Ball had accepted another. The Top still spun round and hummed, but he was always thinking of the Ball, who, in his imagination, became prettier and prettier.

Several years went by, and his love story was now an old romance. The Top, also, was no longer young; but one day he was gilded all over. Never had he looked so handsome! He was now a golden Top, and spun until he hummed. Yes, it was indeed a sight worth seeing. But all of a sudden he went too high, and was gone! They searched everywhere, even in the cellar, but he was nowhere to be found. Where was he?

He had jumped into the dust-bin, where all sorts of rubbish was lying—cabbage-stalks, sweepings, and dust that had fallen from the gutter.

"Now I am in a nice place!" he thought. "My gilding will soon wear off. Among what a rabble have I fallen!" He glanced at a long cabbage-stalk, the leaves of which had been picked quite closely, and at a curious round thing that looked like an old apple; but it was not an apple—it was an old Ball, which for many years had been lying in the gutter under the roof, and was soaked with water.

"Thank goodness, here comes one of my own class, whom I can speak to," said the Ball, looking at the gilt Top. "I am made of real morocco, sewn by maidens' hands, and I have a cork in my body, although one would scarcely think so to look at me. I was about to be married to a Swallow, when I fell into the gutter, and there I have lain for five years, and I have become soaked through: it is a long time, believe me, for a young girl."

But the Top said nothing; he thought of his old love, and the more he heard, the more convinced he was that it was she.

Then the maid-servant came to clear out the dust-bin.

"Hullo! here is the golden Top," she said. So the Top was brought back into the house again, and came to great honour. But nothing was heard of the Ball; and the Top says never a word about his old love, for love dies away when the beloved has lain for five years in a gutter and become soaked through; and one can no longer recognise her, if one happen to meet her in a dust-bin.

LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS.

"MY poor flowers are quite dead," said little Ida; "they were so pretty last night, and now all the leaves are hanging withered. Why do they do that?" she asked the Student, who was sitting on the sofa.

She liked him so much. He could tell the most beautiful stories, and cut out the funniest pictures—hearts with little ladies inside who were dancing, flowers, and huge palaces with doors to open. He was such a merry Student.

"Why do the flowers look so faded to-day?" she asked again, and showed him a whole bunch which was quite withered.

"Well, do you know what is the matter with them?" said the Student. "The flowers went to a ball last night—that is why they hang their heads."

"But flowers cannot dance, can they?" said little Ida.

"Oh, yes," replied the Student; "when it is getting dark and we are all asleep, they jump about merrily. Nearly every night they have a ball."

"May not little children go to those balls?"

"Of course they may," said the Student, "if they are little tiny daisies or lilies of the valley."

"And where do the pretty flowers dance?" asked little Ida.

"Have you not often been outside the gates of the town to the large Palace where the King lives in the summer—where that beautiful garden is with so many flowers? You must have seen the swans that swim up to you when you give them bread. There is a grand ball there, I can tell you."

"I was in the garden out there yesterday with Mother," said Ida, "but all the leaves were off the trees and there was not a single flower. Where are they? I saw such a quantity in the summer."

"They are up in the Palace," replied the Student. "You must know that as soon as the King and the whole Court go back to town all the flowers run away from the garden and up to the Palace. And oh! how happy they are! You should see them. The two most beautiful roses seat themselves on the throne and say they are King and Queen, and the red cockscombs stand drawn up on each side, bowing; they are lords-in-waiting. The prettiest flowers come in afterwards, and then there is a grand ball. The purple violets stand for little naval cadets, and they dance with the hyacinths and crocuses, whom they call young ladies. The tulips and the large yellow lilies are old ladies, who see that everything is going on nicely during the dance."

"But," said little Ida, "does no one do any harm to the flowers for dancing in the King's Palace?"

"Well, nobody really knows of it," said the Student. "Sometimes at night the old steward who takes care of the place comes along, but he has a large bunch of keys with

him, and as soon as the flowers hear the rattle of the keys, they hide themselves behind the long curtains, and keep very quiet, just poking their heads out. 'I can smell there are some flowers about here,' says the old steward, but he cannot see them."

"Oh, how funny!" said little Ida, clapping her hands; "but should I not be able to see the flowers?"

"Oh, yes," said the Student. "Don't forget to look in at the window when you go out there again, then you are sure to see them. That is what I did to-day, and I saw a long yellow daffodil stretched out on the sofa. She fancied she was a maid-of-honour."

"May the flowers in the Botanical Gardens go there too? Can they go all that way?"

"Yes, certainly," said the Student, "for when they like they can fly! Have you not seen the pretty butterflies—the red, yellow, and white ones? They look nearly like flowers, and that is what they really have been once. They spring off the stalk into the air, and flutter with their petals as though they were little wings, and then they fly away. When they behave well they are allowed to fly about in the day as well, and need not go home and sit on the stalk; so in time the petals become real wings. This you have seen yourself, but it may be that the flowers in the Botanical Gardens have never been to the King's Palace, and do not know of the merry doings there at night. I will tell you what to do, and the Professor of Botany who lives close by will be very much surprised indeed. You know him, do you not? When you go into his garden,

you must tell one of the flowers that there is going to be a grand ball at the Palace; that flower will then tell the others, and they will all fly away, and when the Professor goes out into his garden there will not be a single flower left, and he will wonder what has become of them."



*The Professor saw a big
stinging-nettle making signs
to a beautiful red carnation. (P. 164.)*

"But how can one flower tell the others? Flowers cannot speak, can they?"

"No, of course they can't," said the Student, "but then they make signs. Have you never seen how the flowers, when it is blowing a little, nod to each other and shake

their green leaves? That is just as easy to understand as if they were speaking."

"Can the Professor understand these signs?" asked Ida.

"To be sure he can. One morning, as he walked in his garden, he saw a big stinging-nettle making signs with its leaves to a beautiful red carnation. It said, 'You are charming and I like you very much,' but the Professor could not stand such nonsense, so he rapped the nettle over its leaves, which are its fingers; however, he stung himself, and since then he has not dared to touch a nettle again."

"That is very curious," said Ida, and laughed.

"How can anybody teach a child such nonsense?" said the disagreeable old Councillor, who was paying a visit, and sat upon the sofa.

He did not like the Student, and was always grumbling when he saw him cutting out his funny pictures; now it was a man who was hanging from a gibbet with a heart in his hand, for he was a thief of hearts; now an old witch riding on a broomstick with her husband on her nose. This kind of thing the Councillor did not like, and so he would say, as before: "How can anybody teach a child such nonsense? They are all stupid fancies."

But to little Ida what the Student told her about the flowers seemed very funny, and she thought a great deal over it.

The flowers were drooping their heads because they were tired of dancing all night, and very likely they were ill, so she took them round to where all her playthings were standing on a nice little table. The drawer was full of pretty

things, and in a little bed lay her doll, Sophy. But little Ida said to her:

"You must really get up, Sophy, and you will have to sleep in the drawer to-night. The poor flowers are ill, and must have your bed; perhaps then they will get well again!" So she took the doll out, who said not a single word, for she was quite cross at being turned out of her bed. Ida laid the flowers in the doll's bed, drew the cover up over them, and told them to lie still and be good, and she would make them some tea, so that they might be quite well in the morning. Then she drew the curtains closer round the little bed, so that the sun might not shine in their eyes. All through the evening she could not help thinking of what the Student had told her, and before she went to bed herself she had a peep behind the curtains where her mother's beautiful flowers were standing in the window, both hyacinths and tulips.

She whispered softly, "I know very well that you are going to a ball to-night." The flowers, however, did not seem to understand, for they did not move a leaf, but little Ida knew what she knew.

After she was in bed, she lay awake a long while, thinking how pretty it must be to see these beautiful flowers dancing in the King's Palace. "I wonder if my flowers have really been there?" she said, and so she fell asleep.

Later in the night she woke up. She had been dreaming of the flowers, and of the Councillor who grumbled at the Student, and said: "How can anybody teach a child such nonsense?" It was very quiet in the room where Ida was

sleeping. The night-lamp was burning on the table, and her father and mother were asleep.

"I wonder if my flowers are now in Sophy's bed?" she said to herself; "I should really like to know." She raised herself a little and glanced towards the half-open door, behind which lay her flowers and all her playthings. As she listened it seemed to her as if somebody was playing on the piano in the drawing-room, but very softly and more sweetly than she had ever heard before. "Now all the flowers must be dancing in there," she said. "Oh, dear, I should really like to see them!" But she did not dare to get out of bed, for fear she might wake her father and mother. "If they would only come in here," she thought. But the flowers did not come, and the music continued so beautifully that she could not keep still, for it was really too pretty. So she crept out of her little bed, and went softly to the door and looked into the drawing-room. Oh, what a lovely sight she saw, to be sure!

No night-lamp was burning in the room, but it was quite light, and the moon was shining in through the window on to the floor; it was nearly as light as daytime. All the hyacinths and tulips stood in two long rows. They were no longer in the window, where all the flower-pots were empty. Down on the floor all the flowers were dancing gracefully with one another, making a real chain, and holding each other by their long green leaves as they swung round. At the piano sat a large yellow lily, which Ida made sure she had seen in the summer, for she remembered very well the Student's saying, "Oh, isn't she like Miss Lina?" Then they all laughed at him,

but now Ida began to think also that the tall yellow flower resembled that lady. She carried herself in just the same way when playing, leaning her long yellow face now on one side and now on the other, nodding time to the beautiful music.

No one took any notice of little Ida. She saw a large purple crocus jump on to the middle of the table, go to the doll's bed, and pull the curtains aside. There lay the sick flowers, but they got up at once, and nodded to the others that they wished to join the dance.

The old chimney-sweep doll, whose under-lip was broken off, stood bowing to the pretty flowers. They did not look ill at all, and jumped down amongst the others and were as happy as ever.

Presently it seemed as if something fell from the table. Ida turned round and saw the carnival birch jump about on the floor, as if it fancied itself also one of the flowers. It was really very pretty! On the handle there sat a nice little wax doll wearing a broad-brimmed hat just like the Councillor's. The birch was jumping about in among the flowers, and was stamping very hard, for it was dancing the mazurka, which the flowers could not dance, because they were too light: they were not able to stamp.

The little wax doll on the birch all at once grew very big and tall; it got out from the surrounding paper flowers and cried loudly:

"How can anybody teach a child such nonsense? They are only stupid fancies." And the wax doll exactly resembled the Councillor with his broad-brimmed hat, and looked just as yellow and cross.

But the paper flowers rapped him over his thin legs, and then he shrank up again and became a tiny little wax doll as before.

It was so amusing that little Ida could not help laughing. The birch kept on dancing, and the Councillor had to dance with it; there was no help, whether he made himself big and tall, or became the tiny yellow wax doll again with the big black hat.

Then the flowers interceded for him, especially those who had been lying in the doll's bed, and at last the carnival birch stopped. At the same moment a loud knocking was heard from the drawer where Ida's doll Sophy lay with all the other toys. The chimney-sweep ran up to the edge of the table, lay flat on his stomach, and got the drawer out a little bit. Sophy raised herself up and looked round very much surprised.

"A ball must be going on," she said. "Why has no one told me about it?"

"Will you have a dance with me?" said the chimney-sweep.

"Well, you are a pretty partner!" said she, and turned her back on him. She sat up on the drawer and thought that one of the flowers might come and ask her for a dance; but no one came, so she coughed "H'm, h'm, h'm," but still no one came. The chimney-sweep was dancing alone, and he did not dance so badly, but as none of the flowers seemed to take any notice of Sophy, she let herself fall from the drawer down on the floor, and this made a great noise. All the flowers at once came running round and asked if

she had hurt herself; they were very polite to her, especially the flowers who had been lying in her bed. But she had not hurt herself and they all thanked her for her nice bed, and seemed to like her very much; they took her to the middle of the floor, where the moon was shining, and danced with her, and all the other flowers made a ring around them.

Sophy was very happy, and she told them they might as well keep her bed, for she did not mind lying in the drawer.

"Thank you very much," said the flowers, "but anyhow we cannot live very long; to-morrow we shall be dead. Tell little Ida to bury us in the garden where the canary bird lies, and then we will grow up again next summer and be far prettier."

"Oh, you must not die," said Sophy, and kissed them. At this moment the door opened, and quite a number of beautiful flowers came dancing in. Ida could not understand where they came from, but she thought they must be the flowers from the King's Palace. First came two lovely roses, and they had little golden crowns on their heads. These were the King and Queen. Then came the prettiest stocks and carnations, bowing to everyone present. They also had music with them: big poppies and peonies were blowing into pea-pods till they were quite red in the face, and the harebells and the little white snowdrops kept ringing as if they had little rattles; it was very remarkable music. Then came a number of other flowers, and they all danced together, the blue violets and the red daisies, and the snowdrops and the lilies of the valley; and all the flowers kissed each other, and oh, it was a beautiful sight!

At last the flowers said "Good night," and little Ida stole back again to her bed, where she dreamed of all she had seen. When she got up next morning, she went at once to the little table to see if the flowers were still there. She pulled the curtains away from the little bed. Yes, there they lay, all of them, but they were quite withered,—much more so than yesterday. Sophy was lying there asleep. "Do you remember what you were to tell me?" said little Ida, but Sophy looked quite stupid, and did not say a single word. "You are not at all nice," said Ida, "and yet they all danced with you." She took a little cardboard box with beautifully painted birds on, opened it, and placed the dead flowers inside. "This shall be your pretty coffin," she said, "and when my cousins from Norway come down they shall help to bury you in the garden, and next summer you will grow up and become much prettier than before."

The cousins from Norway were two very nice boys, John and Adolph. Their father had given them two new crossbows, and they had brought them to show Ida. She told them about the poor little flowers that died, and asked them to help to bury them. The two boys went in front with the crossbows on their shoulders, and little Ida came after, with the dead flowers in the pretty box. Out in the garden they dug a little grave. Ida first kissed the flowers, and then buried them with the box, down under the mould, and Adolph and John shot with their crossbows over the grave, for they had no guns.

THE BRAVE TIN SOLDIER.



The little maiden stretched out both her arms, for she was a dancer. (P. 172.)

THERE were once five-and-twenty tin soldiers, who were all brothers, for they were all born of the same old tin spoon. They carried their muskets on their shoulders, and looked straight in front of them; their uniform was red and blue, and very pretty indeed. The very first thing they heard in this world, when the lid was taken off the box, was the words, "Tin Soldiers!" for that is what a little boy cried, clapping his hands, as he saw them; they were given to him because it was his birthday, and he set them up on the table. All the soldiers were like each

other except one, who was a little different; he had only one leg, for he was the last to be cast, and there was not enough tin, but he stood just as steadily on his one leg as the others on their two. And it was just this one who became famous.

On the table, where they were all set up, a number of other toys were standing, but what first met the eye was a beautiful castle made of cardboard. Through the small windows you could see straight into the rooms; little trees were standing outside, around a little piece of looking-glass that represented a lake. Swans of wax were swimming there, and were reflected in it. This was very pretty; but prettiest of all was a little maid who was standing at the open door of the castle; she also was cut out of cardboard, but she had a skirt of the finest gauze, and a little narrow blue ribbon over the shoulders like a sash, in the middle of which was a little bit of glittering tinsel as large as her whole face. The little maiden stretched out both her arms, for she was a dancer, and she lifted one of her legs so high that the Tin Soldier could not see it at all, and thought that she had only one leg, like himself.

"That would be the wife for me," he thought, "but she is too aristocratic, and lives in a castle. I have only a box, and that belongs to the whole twenty-five of us. That is no place for her; but I would like to make her acquaintance all the same." So he laid himself down at full length behind a snuff-box where he could easily watch the charming little maid, who kept standing on one leg without losing her balance.

Towards evening all the other tin soldiers were put into the box, and the people in the house went to bed. Then the toys began to play: paid visits, went to war, and gave balls. The tin soldiers rattled in their box, for they wanted to join in the fun, but they could not get the lid

off. The nut-crackers were turning somersaults; the slate pencil was at work on the slate; and there was such a noise that the canary bird woke up and began to join in the chatter, but he spoke in verse. The only two who did not move from their places were the Tin Soldier and the little dancer. She was standing straight up on the tip of her toe, with both arms stretched out, and the Tin Soldier stood just as firmly on his one leg, and did not take his eyes off her, even for a moment.

The clock struck twelve, when bang! off went the lid of the snuff-box. There was no snuff in it, but only a tiny black goblin, and a clever toy it was. "Tin Soldier," said the goblin, "please keep your eyes to yourself," but the Tin Soldier pretended not to hear. "Well, wait till to-morrow," said the goblin.

When the children came down in the morning, the Tin Soldier was put in the window, and whether it was the goblin or the draught that did it, all of a sudden the window flew up and the soldier fell head over heels from the third storey. He came down at a terrible rate, and then he stuck upon his helmet, with his only leg straight up in the air, and his bayonet between the paving-stones. The servant and the little boy at once went down to find him, but they could not see him, although they nearly trod on him.

If only the little Tin Soldier had cried, "Here I am," they might perhaps have found him, but he did not think it proper to call out loudly when he was in uniform.

Then it began to rain; the drops fell thicker and thicker, until it became a real downpour. When it was

over two street boys came along. "Just look," said one, "here's a Tin Soldier; let us send him for a sail." So they made a little boat out of a newspaper, put the Tin Soldier in the middle, and there he was, sailing down the gutter. Both the boys ran alongside and clapped their hands. Goodness me! what large waves there were in that gutter, and how strong the current was!—but then it had been a real downpour.

The paper boat was tossed up and down, and now and then it turned round and round, until the Tin Soldier was quite dizzy, but he was brave and didn't move a muscle; he just looked straight in front of him and shouldered his musket. All at once the boat drifted into a long drain-pipe, where it was just as dark as if he had been in his box. "Where am I going now?" he thought. "Yes, it must be the goblin's fault. Now, if only the little lady were here in the boat, I would not mind if it were twice as dark." Suddenly they came upon a big water-rat, who lived in the drain-pipe. "Have you a passport?" said the rat. "Let me have it." The Tin Soldier said not a word, and held his musket tighter than ever. Away went the boat, and the rat after it. Ugh! how he gnashed his teeth and called out to the straws and chips: "Stop him, stop him! he hasn't paid the toll, and hasn't shown his passport!" But the current grew stronger and stronger, and the Tin Soldier could now see daylight shining in at the end of the pipe. He also heard a roaring sound, which really might have frightened the boldest, for just where the gutter ended, the water poured out into a large canal, and this was just as



Away went the boat, and the rat after it. (P. 174)



dangerous for him as it would be for us to be carried over a great waterfall.

He was now so near it that he could not stop, so the boat swept out into the canal. The poor Tin Soldier stiffened himself as well as he could, and no one could say that he even moved an eyelid. The boat whirled round three or four times, filled with water to the very edge, and began to sink. The Tin Soldier stood up to the neck in water, and the boat sank deeper and deeper, the paper loosened more and more, until the water went over the Soldier's head. He thought of the charming little dancer, whom he would never see again, and in his ears sounded the words of the song:—

“Oh, warrior bold, good-bye!
Thy end, alas! is nigh.”

Then the paper burst, the Tin Soldier fell through, and was at once gobbled up by a big fish. Oh! how dark it was in there, even worse than in the drain-pipe, and there was so little room, but the Tin Soldier was brave, and lay at full length with his musket on his shoulder. The fish darted about in the most alarming way; then it lay quite still; but suddenly there was a flash like lightning; the daylight again appeared, and some one cried, “Tin Soldier!” The fish had been caught, taken to the market, sold, and brought to the kitchen, where the cook cut it up with a big knife. She took the Soldier by the waist with her two fingers and marched him into the sitting-room, where they all wanted to see such a remarkable man who had been travelling about in the inside of a fish. The Tin Soldier

wasn't at all proud. They stood him up on the table, and there!—what curious things do happen in the world!—the Tin Soldier was in the very same room in which he had been before! He saw the same children, and the same toys were standing on the table, the pretty castle and the lovely little dancer, and she was still standing on one leg whilst the other was high up in the air. She also was brave; this touched the Tin Soldier, and he was almost ready to weep tin tears, but of course that would not have been at all proper. He looked at her, and she looked at him; but they said nothing. Then one of the little boys took the Soldier and threw him into the fireplace; he did not give any reason for doing this; it must have been the fault of the goblin in the snuff-box. The Tin Soldier was quite lit up, and felt a great heat, but whether from the fire or from love he did not know.

The colours were clean gone; whether this had happened from his travels or from grief no one could tell. He looked at the little maiden and she looked at him; he felt that he was melting, but he stood there bravely and shouldered his musket. Suddenly the door flew open, the draught took hold of the dancer, and she flew like a sylph straight into the fireplace to the Tin Soldier, blazed up into a flame, and was gone. The Tin Soldier melted into a lump, and when the servant-maid took out the ashes next day she found him transformed into a little tin heart. Of the dancer nothing was left but the little bit of tinsel, which was burnt as black as a cinder.

THE STORKS.

ON the last house in a little village stood a storks' nest.

Mother Stork sat in it with her four young ones, who stretched out their heads with the sharp black bills, for these had not yet turned red. A little way off stood Father Stork, erect and stately on the ridge of the roof. He had drawn up one of his legs under him, so as to feel a little uncomfortable while he stood sentry. One might have fancied that he was carved out of wood, so still did he stand.

"It must appear very aristocratic," he thought, "for my wife to have a sentry standing by her nest. They can't know that it is her husband. They must think I have been ordered to stand here; how grand it looks!" So he continued to stand on one leg.

In the street below quite a number of children were playing, and when they caught sight of the storks, one of the boldest of the boys, and afterwards all of them, sang an old rhyme about storks. But they only sang it just as they could remember it:—

"Stork, stork, fly away!
Why stand on one leg all day?
Your wife is in her cosy nest,
Where her four small children rest.
They'll hang one bird,
And fry another,
And shoot the third,
And cook his brother."

"Just listen to what those boys are saying!" said the little Stork children. "They say we are to be hanged and fried."

"Never mind about that!" said Mother Stork. "If you don't listen you won't hear anything."

But the boys went on singing, and pointing at the Storks; only one boy, whose name was Peter, said that it was a shame to tease the birds, and he would have nothing to do with it.

Mother Stork comforted her little ones.

"Never mind," said she; "see how quietly your father stands, although he is only on one leg."

"We are so frightened!" said the young Storks, and they drew their heads far into the nest.

The next day, when the children came out again to play, and saw the Storks, they sang their song:—

"They'll hang one bird,
And fry another."

"Are we really to be hanged and eaten?" asked the young Storks.

"No, indeed!" said the mother. "You must learn to fly; I will teach you; then we will go out into the meadows and pay a visit to the frogs. They will bow to us in the water, and sing 'Co—ax! co—ax!' and then we shall eat them up. That will be very enjoyable."

"And what then?" asked the young Storks.

"Then all the storks in the country will meet together, and begin the autumn manœuvres. By that time you must be able to fly well; that is a very important matter, for

every stork who is unable to fly properly is killed by the general with his beak. You must therefore be careful, and pay great attention when the drilling begins."

"Then we shall be killed after all, just as the boys say? Only listen—now they are saying it again."

"Listen to me, and not to them," said Mother Stork. "After the great manœuvres we shall fly to the warm countries, far away from here, over mountains and forests. We shall fly to Egypt, where there are three-cornered houses of stone which slope up to a point far above the clouds; they call them Pyramids, and they are older than any stork can imagine. There is a river which overflows its banks, and all the land is turned to mud. One walks about in the mud, and eats frogs."

"Oh!" cried all the little ones.

"Yes, it is a delightful place. We do nothing there all day long but eat; and while we are so comfortable over there, in this country not a green leaf is on the trees; it is so cold that the clouds freeze to pieces, and fall down in little white fragments!"

It was the snow that she meant, but this was the best explanation she could give.

"And do the naughty boys also freeze to pieces?" asked the young Storks.

"No, they do not freeze to pieces, but they are not very far from it, and have to sit cowering in their dark rooms; whereas you are able to fly about in those foreign lands, where there are flowers and warm sunshine."

After some time the youngsters grew so big that they

could stand upright in the nest and look far around. Father Stork came every day with delicious frogs, little snakes, and all the other stork dainties that he could find. Oh! what fun it was when he performed his tricks before them! He would lay his head quite back upon his tail, make a noise with his beak, as if it were a rattle; and then he told them stories, all about the marshes.

"Now listen! it is time that you learned to fly," said Mother Stork one day; and so all the four little Storks had to get out on the ridge of the roof. Oh, how they tottered! how they balanced themselves with their wings!—and yet they were near falling.

"Now, just look at me!" said the Mother. "You must hold your heads like this! you must place your feet like this! One! two! one, two! That is what will help you on in the world."

Then she flew a little way, and the young ones made a little clumsy leap. Bump!—there they lay, for their bodies were too heavy.

"I don't want to fly!" said one of the little Storks, and he crept back into the nest; "I don't care to go to the warm countries."

"Then do you want to be frozen to death when the winter comes? Are the boys to come and hang you? Now, I will just call them!"

"Oh! no," cried the little Stork, and he hopped out on to the roof again like the rest.

On the third day they could actually fly a little; so they thought they could rest on their wings in the air. But

When they tried this—bump!—down they tumbled, and they had to flap their wings again. Now the boys came down the street, and sang their song:—

“Stork, stork, fly away!”

“Shall we fly down and peck out their eyes?” asked the young Storks.

“No; leave them alone,” replied the mother; “only listen to me, that is far more important. One, two, three!—now we fly round to the right. One, two, three!—now round to the left of the chimney! Yes, that was very good; the last flap with the wings was so neat and correct that I will give you permission to go to the marsh with me to-morrow! Several good Stork families go there with their youngsters. Let them see that you are the nicest, and that you can walk upright, for it looks well, and causes you to be respected.”

“But shall we not be revenged on those rude boys?” asked the young Storks.

“Let them scream as much as they like. You will fly up to the clouds, and go to the land of the Pyramids, when they will be left to shiver, and will not even have a green leaf or a sweet apple.”

“Yes, we will revenge ourselves!” they whispered to one another; and so they again began practising.

Of all the boys down in the street, the one who most enjoyed singing the teasing song was he who had started it, and he was quite a little boy. He could hardly be more than six years old. The young Storks thought he was quite a hundred, for he was much bigger than their father and

mother; and how should they know how old children and grown-up people were? They would be revenged at least upon this little boy, for it was he who had begun, and he always kept on. The young Storks were very angry; and as they grew bigger they were less inclined to bear it. At last their mother had to promise them that they should be revenged, but not until the day of their leaving the country.

"We must first see how you behave yourselves at the grand manœuvres. If you get through them badly, so that the general stabs you to the heart with his beak, the boys will be right—at least, in one way. Now let us see."

"Yes, you shall see," cried the young Storks; and then they took great pains. They practised every day, and flew so swiftly and gracefully, that it was a pleasure to see them.

Now the autumn came on; all the Storks began to flock together, to fly away to countries where it is warm, while we have the winter here. Then came the manœuvres. They had to go over forests and villages, only to see how well they could fly, for it was a long journey that they had before them. The young Storks did so well that they got "Remarkably good, with frogs and snakes." That was the highest mark; and they were allowed to eat the frogs and snakes—so that is what they did.

"Now we will have our revenge!" they said.

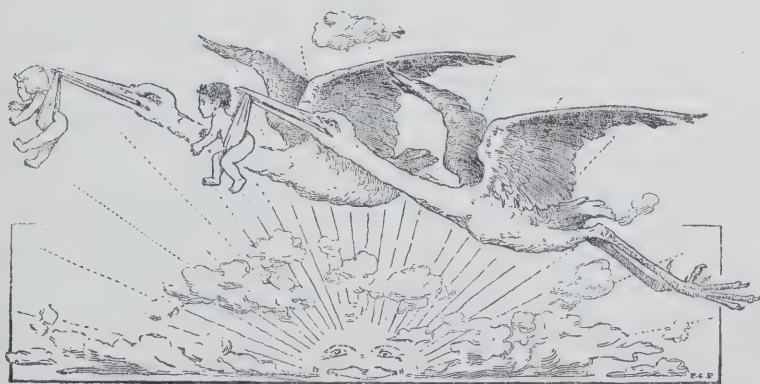
"Yes, certainly!" said Mother Stork. "I have thought of the best plan. I know the pond in which all the tiny little human children lie till the Stork comes and brings them to their parents. The pretty little babies lie there sleeping, dreaming more sweetly than they will ever dream

afterwards. All parents are glad to have such a baby, and all children want a little sister or brother. Now we will fly to the pond, and fetch one for each of the children who has not sung the naughty song and made fun of the Storks."

"But he who started singing—that naughty, ugly boy!" screamed the young Storks; "what shall we do to him?"

"There is a little dead baby in the pond, that has dreamed itself to death; we will bring that for him, Then he will cry, because we have brought him a little dead brother. But to that good boy—you have not forgotten him—the one who said: 'It is wrong to tease the birds!'—to him we will bring a brother *and* a sister. And as his name is Peter, all of you shall be called Peter too."

And it happened as she said; all the Storks were called Peter, and that is their name to this day.



THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES.

MANY years ago there lived an Emperor who was so exceedingly fond of fine new clothes that he spent all his money on rich dresses. He did not care for his soldiers, nor for the theatre, nor for driving about, except for the purpose of showing his new clothes.

He had a dress for every hour of the day, and just as they say of a king, "He is in Council," they always said of him, "The Emperor is in his Wardrobe."

Well, the great town in which he lived was very busy. Every day a number of strangers arrived.

One day two rogues came along, saying they were weavers, and that they knew how to weave the finest stuff one could imagine. Not only, said they, were the colours and designs exceedingly beautiful, but the clothes that were made of their material had the wonderful quality of being invisible to everybody who was either unfit for his position, or was extraordinarily stupid.

"They must be splendid clothes," thought the Emperor; "by wearing them I could easily discover what persons in my kingdom are unfit for their posts. I could distinguish the wise from the stupid. I must have that stuff woven

for me at once!" So he gave the two rogues a large sum of money, in order that they might begin their work without delay.

The rogues put up two looms, and pretended to be working, but they had nothing at all in the frames. Again and again they demanded the finest silks and the most magnificent gold thread, but they put it all in their own pockets, and worked at their empty looms late into the night.

"Now, I should like to know how far they have got on with that stuff," thought the Emperor; but he felt quite uncomfortable when he remembered that those who were stupid or unfit for their positions could not see it. He did not think for a moment that he had anything to fear for himself; but nevertheless, he would rather send somebody else first to see how the stuff was getting on.

Everybody in the town knew what a remarkable quality the stuff possessed, and each was anxious to see how bad or how stupid his neighbours were.

"I will send my honest old minister to the weavers," thought the Emperor; "he can judge best how the stuff looks, for he is intelligent, and no one is better fit for his office than he."

So the clever old minister went out into the hall, where the two rogues were sitting at work on their empty looms.

"Goodness me!" he thought, and opened his eyes wide; "I cannot see anything," but he did not say so. Both of the rogues begged him to be so kind as to step nearer, and

asked him was it not a pretty design, and were not the colours beautiful, and they pointed to the empty looms.

But the poor old minister kept on opening his eyes wider and wider: he could not see anything, for there was nothing there.

"Goodness me!" he thought; "am I really stupid? I never thought so, and nobody must know it. Am I really unfit for my office? No; I must certainly not tell anybody that I cannot see the stuff."

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked the one who was weaving.

"Oh, it is beautiful! most magnificent!" replied the old minister, and looked through his spectacles. "What a pattern! and what colours! Yes, I must tell the Emperor that I like it very much indeed."

"Ah! we are very glad of that," said both weavers, and then they described the colours, and explained the strange patterns.

The old minister listened attentively, so as to be able to repeat it all when he returned to the Emperor, and this he did.

The rogues now asked for more money, and for more silk and gold thread, which they required for weaving. They put everything into their pockets, and not a thread went on the frames, but nevertheless they continued to work at the empty looms.

Soon afterwards the Emperor sent another clever statesman to see how the weaving was getting on, and whether the stuff was nearly ready. The same thing

happened to him as to the minister; he looked and looked, but as there was nothing on the empty frames, he could not see anything.

"Now, is not that a beautiful piece of stuff?" said both rogues, and described the beauty of the pattern, which did not exist at all.

"I am not stupid," thought the statesman, "so it must be that I am unfit for the high position I hold; that is very strange, but I must not let anybody notice it." So he praised the piece of stuff which he could not see, and said how pleased he was with the beautiful colours and the pretty pattern.

"Oh! it is really magnificent!" he said to the Emperor.

All the people in the town were talking about the beautiful stuff, and the Emperor himself wished to see it while it was still on the loom. With a whole suite of chosen courtiers, among whom were the two honest old statesmen who had been there before, the Emperor went to the two cunning rogues, who were now weaving as fast as they could, but without thread or shuttle.

"Well! is it not magnificent?" cried the two clever statesmen; "does your majesty recognise how beautiful is the pattern, how charming the colours?" and they pointed to the empty looms, for they thought that the others could see the stuff.

"What?" thought the Emperor; "I cannot see anything; this is terrible! Am I stupid; or am I not fit to be Emperor? This would be the most dreadful thing that could happen to me! Yes, it is very beautiful," he said at last; "we give

our highest approbation:" and he nodded as if he were quite satisfied, and gazed at the empty looms.

He would not say that he saw nothing, and the whole of his suite looked and looked; but, like the others, they were unable to see anything. So they said, just like the Emperor, "Yes, it is very pretty," and they advised him to have some clothes made from this magnificent stuff, and to wear them for the first time at the great procession that was about to take place. "It is magnificent! beautiful! excellent!" they said one to another, and they were all so exceedingly pleased with it that the Emperor gave the two rogues a decoration to be worn in the button-hole, and the title "Imperial Weavers."

The rogues worked throughout the whole of the night preceding the day of the procession, and had over sixteen candles alight, so that people should see how busy they were in preparing the Emperor's new clothes.

They pretended to take the stuff off the looms, cut it in the air with great scissors, and sewed with needles without thread, and at last they said—

"See! now the clothes are ready!"

The Emperor, followed by his most distinguished courtiers, came in person, and the rogues lifted their arms up in the air, just as if they held something, and said, "See! here are the trousers, here is the coat, here is the cloak," and so forth. "It is all as light as a cobweb; one might imagine one had nothing on, but that is just the beauty of it!"

"Yes," said all the courtiers; but they could not see anything, because there was nothing.

"Will your imperial highness condescend to undress?" said the rogues; "we will then attire your majesty in the new clothes, here in front of the mirror."



The rogues lifted their arms up in the air, just as if they held something.
(P. 190.)

"Oh! how well they look! how beautifully they fit!" said every one; "what a pattern! what colours! It is indeed a magnificent dress."

"They are standing outside with the canopy which is

to be carried over your majesty in the procession," announced the Master of the Ceremonies.

"Well, I am ready," said the Emperor. "Does it not fit me well!" and he turned again to the mirror, for he wanted it to appear that he was admiring his rich costume.

The chamberlains who were to carry the train fumbled with their hands on the floor just as if they were holding the train up; they raised their hands in the air, but dared not let anybody notice that they saw nothing: and so the Emperor went in procession beneath the magnificent canopy, and all the people in the street and at the windows said: "Oh! how beautiful the Emperor's new clothes are; what a splendid train, and how well everything fits!"

No one would admit that he could see nothing, for that would have shown that he was either unfit for his post or very stupid. None of the Emperor's dresses had ever been so much admired.

"But he has nothing on at all!" said a little child.

"Just hear the voice of the innocent," said his father, and one whispered to the other what the child had said. "He has nothing on," says a little child; 'he has nothing on!'"

"But he has nothing on," cried the whole of the people at last; and the Emperor shivered, for it seemed to him that they were right.

But he thought to himself, "I must go through with the procession," and he walked with even greater dignity than before; and the chamberlains followed, carrying the train which did not exist at all.

THE FARMYARD COCK AND THE WEATHERCOCK.

THERE were two Cocks—one on the dunghill, the other on the roof. Both were conceited; but which of the two was of more use?

Tell us your opinion; we shall keep our own all the same.

The poultry-yard was divided by a fence from another yard, in which lay a dunghill, and on this grew a great Cucumber, which was fully conscious of being a forcing-bed plant.

“That is a privilege of birth,” the Cucumber said to herself; “everybody cannot be born a cucumber; there must be other beings as well. The fowls, the ducks, and all the inhabitants of the neighbouring yard are creatures too. I look up to the Yard Cock on the fence. He is certainly of much greater importance than the Weather-Cock, who, it is true, is highly placed, but who cannot even creak, much less crow; has neither hens nor chickens, thinks only of himself, and perspires verdigris. But the Yard Cock—he is something like a cock! His walk is like a dance, his crowing is music, and wherever he goes he makes himself heard. What a trumpeter he is! If he came in here, and were to eat me up, leaf, stalk, and all, it would be quite a blissful death,” said the Cucumber.

When night came, the weather was very bad. Hens, chickens, and even the Farmyard Cock himself, were driven to shelter. The wind blew down the fence between the two yards with a fearful crash, the tiles came tumbling down, but the Weather-Cock stood fast. He did not even turn round; in fact, he could not, although he was young and newly cast—he was firm and steady. He had been “born old,” and was not at all like the birds that fly beneath the sky, such as the sparrows and the swallows. These he despised, considering them piping birds of insignificant size—just ordinary song-birds.

“As for the pigeons,” said the Weather-Cock, “they are large and brilliant, and gleam like mother-of-pearl—in fact, they looked like a kind of weather-cock; but they are fat and stupid, and think of nothing but stuffing themselves with food. Besides,” he said, “they are tiresome company.”

The birds of passage had also paid him a visit, and told him about foreign countries, about caravans of the air and exciting robber stories, containing encounters with birds of prey. It was all very interesting at first, but the Weather-Cock found that they always repeated themselves; their stories were constantly the same, and that was tedious.

“They are tedious, and everything is tedious,” he said. “No one is fit to associate with. The world is no good; it is all nonsense.”

The Weather-Cock was what is called “tired of the world,” and that quality would certainly have made him interesting in the eyes of the Cucumber if she had known

it. But she had only eyes for the Yard Cock, who now came into her own yard.

The wind had blown down the fence, but the thunder and lightning were over.

"What do you think of *that* crowing?" the Yard Cock asked of his hens and chickens.

"It is a little rough, a little wanting in elegance."

The hens and chickens stepped out on the muck-heap, and the Cock strutted after them like a knight.

"Garden plant!" he said to the Cucumber; and by this one remark she recognised his immense education, and forgot that he was pecking at her and eating her up. Blissful death!

And the hens came, and the chickens came, and when one of them runs, all the rest run; and they clucked and chirped, and looked at the Cock, and were proud that he was one of their family.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" he crowed. "If I crow like that in the great poultry-yard of the world, the chickens will at once become big fowls."

And the hens and the chickens clucked and chirped, and the Cock told them a great piece of news:—

"A Cock can lay an egg; and what do you think is in that egg? In that egg lies a basilisk. No one can endure the sight of it. Men know this, and now you know it too—you know what is in me, and what a Cock-of-All-the-Poultry-Yards I am!"

And the Yard Cock flapped his wings, made his comb swell up, and crowed again; and all the fowls shuddered, and so did the little chickens; but they were very proud

indeed that one of their family should be a Cock-of-All-the-Poultry-Yards. They clucked and chirped, so that the Weather-Cock should hear it; and he heard it, but he did not move.

"It's all stupid nonsense," said the Weather-Cock. "The Yard Cock could never lay an egg, and I am too lazy to lay one. If I cared to, I might lay a wind-egg, but the world is not worth a wind-egg. And now I don't even care to sit here any longer."

And so the Weather-Cock broke off. But he did not kill the Yard Cock, although this, said the hens, was his intention.

And what is the moral?—"It is better to crow than to be tired of the world, and break off."



THE TINDER-BOX.

THERE came a soldier marching along the high-road—one, two! one, two! He had a knapsack on his back, and a sword by his side, for he had been in the wars, and now he was going home. On the way he met with an old witch; she was very hideous, and her underlip hung down upon her breast. She said: "Good evening, soldier. What a fine sword you have, and what a big knapsack! You are a real soldier! You shall have as much money as you wish."

"Thank you, old witch," said the soldier.

"Do you see that big tree?" asked the witch, pointing to a tree that stood close by them. "It is quite hollow inside. You must climb to the top, and then you will see a hole, through which you can let yourself slide, so as to get deep down into the tree. I will tie a rope round your waist, so that I can pull you up again when you call out to me."

"What am I to do down in the tree?" asked the soldier.

"Fetch some money!" replied the witch. "When you get to the bottom of the tree you will see a large cave;

it is quite light, for over a hundred lamps are burning there. Then you will see three doors; these you can open, for the keys are in the key-holes. If you go into the first chamber, you will see a great chest in the middle of the floor; on this chest sits a dog, with eyes as big as a pair of tea-cups, But you need not care about that. I will give you my blue-checked apron, and you can spread it out upon the floor; then go up quickly and take the dog, and set him on my apron, open the chest, and take as many pence as you like. They are all copper. If you prefer silver, you must go into the second chamber; there sits a dog with a pair of eyes as big as mill-wheels. But you need not care about that. Set him upon my apron and take some of the money. If you want gold, you can have that too—as much as you can carry—by going into the third chamber. But the dog that sits on the money-chest there has two eyes as big as the Round Tower.* He is a fierce dog, to be sure; but you need not care about that. Only set him on my apron, and he won't hurt you; then take out of the chest as much gold as you like."

"That's not so bad," said the soldier. "But what am I to give you, old witch, for you will want something, too, I suppose?"

"No," replied the witch, "not a single shilling. You need only bring me an old Tinder-box which my grandmother forgot when she was down there last."

"Well, then, let me get the rope round my waist," said the soldier.

* The Round Tower is a well-known tower in Copenhagen.

"Here it is," said the witch, "and here is my blue-checked apron."

And the soldier climbed up into the tree, let himself all bump! down through the hole, and stood, as the witch



The soldier climbed up into the tree. (P. 199.)

had said, in the great cave, where over a hundred lamps were burning.

Now he opened the first door. Ugh! there sat the dog with eyes as big as tea-cups, staring at him.

"You're a fine fellow!" exclaimed the soldier; and he set him on the witch's apron, and took as many coppers as

his pockets would hold; locked the chest, put the dog back on it again, and went into the second chamber. Aha! there sat the dog with the eyes as big as mill-wheels.

"You should not stare so hard at me," said the soldier; "you might hurt your eyes." And he set the dog upon the witch's apron. And when he saw the many silver coins in the chest, he threw away all the coppers he had, and filled his pockets and his knapsack with silver.

Then he went into the third chamber. Oh, that was terrible! The dog in there really had two eyes as big as the Round Tower, and they turned round and round in his head like wheels.

"Good evening!" said the soldier, and touched his cap, for he had never seen such a dog before. When he looked at him a little more closely, he thought, "That will do," lifted him down on to the floor, and opened the chest. Good gracious! what a mass of gold! There was enough to buy the whole of Copenhagen, and all the cake-women's sugar pigs, and all the tin soldiers, whips, and rocking-horses in the whole world. What a quantity of money there was, to be sure! Now the soldier threw away all the silver coins with which he had filled his pockets and his knapsack, and took gold instead. He filled all his pockets, his knapsack, his boots, and his cap, so that he could scarcely walk. Now indeed he had plenty of money. He put the dog on the chest, slammed the door, and called out through the tree: "Now pull me up, old witch."

"Have you the Tinder-box?" asked the witch.

"There!" exclaimed the soldier, "I have clean forgotten it."



She lay asleep on the dog's back.

(The Tinder Box.)

And he went and fetched it.

The witch pulled him up, and he stood on the high-road again, with pockets, boots, knapsack, and cap full of golden coins.

"What are you going to do with the Tinder-box?" he asked.

"That has nothing to do with you," replied the witch. "You have your money—now give me the Tinder-box."

"Nonsense!" said the soldier. "Tell me at once what you are going to do with it, or I will draw my sword and cut off your head!"

"No!" cried the witch.

So the soldier cut off her head. There she lay! And he tied up all his money in her apron, lifted it on to his back like a bundle, put the Tinder-box in his pocket, and went straight off to the town.

It was a splendid town! He put up at the very best inn, asked for the finest rooms, and ordered dishes that he liked, for he was now rich, and had plenty of money. The servant who had to clean his boots certainly thought them remarkably old pair for such a rich gentleman; but he had not bought any new ones yet. The next day he ordered proper boots and handsome clothes. Now the soldier had become a fine gentleman. The people told him of all the splendour in their city, and about the King, and what a beautiful Princess the King's daughter was.

"Where is she to be seen?" asked the soldier.

"She is not to be seen at all," they all said; "she lives in a great copper castle, surrounded by many walls and

towers. No one but the King may visit the castle, for it has been prophesied that she will marry a common soldier, and the King will not hear of this."

"I should like to see her," thought the soldier; but he was unable to get permission.

He now lived merrily, went to the theatre, drove in the King's garden, and gave large sums of money to the poor. This was very kind of him; but he knew from old times how hard it was to be penniless. Now he was rich, had fine clothes, and made many friends, who all said he was a good fellow and a true gentleman; and this pleased him. But as he spent money every day and never earned any, he had at last only twopence left; and he was obliged to move away from the fine rooms in which he had dwelt, and live in a little garret just under the roof, where he had to clean his boots himself, and mend them with a darning-needle. None of his friends came to see him, for there were too many stairs to climb.

One evening it was quite dark, and he could not even buy himself a candle; but it occurred to him that there was a candle-stump in the Tinder-box which he had taken from the hollow tree into which the witch had helped him. He brought out the Tinder-box and the bit of candle; but as soon as he struck a light and the sparks flew from the flint the door sprang open, and the dog with eyes as big as a pair of tea-cups, which he had seen in the tree, stood before him, and said—

"What does my lord order?"

"What?" exclaimed the soldier. "This is a famous

Tinder-box indeed, if it can get me anything I want! Bring me some money!" said he to the dog; and whisk! the dog was gone, and whisk! he was back again, with a big bag full of coppers in his mouth.

Now the soldier knew what a splendid Tinder-box it was. If he struck it once, in came the dog who sat upon the chest of copper money; if he struck it twice, in came the dog who had the silver coins; and if he struck it three times, in came the dog who had the gold.

So the soldier moved back into the fine rooms, appeared in handsome clothes, and all his friends knew him again, and liked him very much indeed.

Then thought he to himself: "It is absurd that one cannot manage to see the Princess. They all say she is so beautiful; but what is the use of that, if she has always to sit in the great copper castle with the many towers? Is there no way I can get to see her? Ah—where is my Tinder-box?" So he struck a light, and whisk! came the dog with eyes as big as tea-cups.

"It is midnight, certainly," said the soldier, "but I should very much like to see the Princess, if only for a moment."

The dog was outside the door at once, and, before the soldier had time to think, he was back again with the Princess. She lay asleep on the dog's back, and was so beautiful that everyone could see that she was a real Princess. The soldier could not help it: he was obliged to kiss her, for he was a real soldier. Then the dog ran back with the Princess.

But when the morning came, and the King and Queen were at breakfast, the Princess said she had dreamed a wonderful dream during the night. It was about a dog and a soldier. She had ridden upon the dog, and the soldier had kissed her.

"Well, that is a fine story," said the Queen. And one of the old maids-of-honour was set to watch the next night by the Princess's bed, to discover whether this was really a dream, or what else it might be.

The soldier had a great longing to see the lovely Princess again; so the dog came in the night, took her away, and ran as fast as he could. But the old maid-of-honour put on water-boots, and ran just as fast after him. When she saw that they disappeared into a great house, she thought, "Now I know where it is," and with a bit of chalk she drew a big cross on the door.

Then she went home and went to bed, and the dog ran back with the Princess; but when he saw that there was a cross drawn on the door where the soldier lived, he took a piece of chalk too, and drew crosses on all the doors in the town. That was cleverly done, for now the maid-of-honour could not find the right door, as there were crosses on all of them.

In the early morning the King and the Queen came with the old maid-of-honour and all the officers of the Court, to see where the Princess had been.

"Here it is!" said the King, when he saw the first door with a cross upon it.

"No, my dear husband, it is here!" said the Queen who saw another door with a cross on it.

"But there is one, and there is another!" they all cried, for wherever they looked there were crosses on the doors. So they saw at once that it would be useless to continue the search.

But the Queen was a very clever woman, who could do more than drive in a carriage. She took her great gold scissors, cut up a big piece of silk, and made a neat little bag; this she filled with fine buckwheat grain, and tied it on the Princess's back; and when that was done, she cut a little hole in the bag, so that the grain would be scattered wherever the Princess went.

In the night the dog went again to the castle, took the Princess on its back, and ran with her to the soldier, who loved her very much, and who wished he was a prince, so that he could make her his wife. The dog did not notice how the grain was scattered the whole way from the castle to the soldier's window, where he ran up the wall with the Princess.

In the morning the King and the Queen easily discovered where their daughter had been, and they took the soldier and put him in prison.

There he sat. Ugh! How dark and miserable it was! And they said to him, "To-morrow you shall be hanged!" That was not a pleasant thing to hear, for he had left his Tinder-box at the inn. In the morning he saw, through the iron grating of the little window, how the people were hurrying out of the town to see him hanged. He heard the drums, and saw the soldiers marching. All the people were running out, and there was a shoemaker's boy with

leathern apron and slippers, who ran so fast that one of his slippers flew off, and came right against the wall where the soldier sat peeping out through the iron grating.

"Hallo, you shoemaker's boy! you needn't be in such a hurry," cried the soldier to him: "it will not begin till I come. If you will run over to where I live, and bring me my Tinder-box, you shall have fourpence, but you must put your best leg foremost."

The shoemaker's boy wished to earn the fourpence, so he hurried away to fetch the Tinder-box, and gave it to the soldier—and now we shall hear what happened.

Outside the town a large scaffold had been erected, and round it stood the soldiers and many hundreds of thousands of people. The King and Queen sat on a splendid throne opposite the judges and the whole Council.

The soldier was standing on the ladder; but as they were about to put the rope round his neck, he said it was usual to grant an innocent request before a poor criminal suffered punishment. He would so very much like to smoke a pipe of tobacco, for it would be the last pipe he would smoke in this world!

This the King could not refuse, so the soldier took his Tinder-box, and struck fire. One—two—three! and suddenly there stood all the dogs—the one with eyes as big as tea-cups, the one with eyes as large as mill-wheels, and the one whose eyes were as big as the Round Tower.

"Help me now, so that I may not be hanged!" said the soldier.

And the dogs fell upon all the judges and the whole

of the Council, seized one by the legs, and another by the nose, and tossed them all yards into the air, so that they fell down, and were dashed to pieces.

"I won't!" cried the King; but the biggest dog took both him and the Queen, and threw them after the others. Then the soldiers were frightened, and all the people cried, "Little soldier, you shall be our King, and marry the beautiful Princess!"

So they put the soldier into the King's coach, and all the three dogs danced in front, and cried, "Hurrah!" and the boys whistled through their fingers, and the soldiers presented arms. The Princess came out from the copper castle, and became Queen, and this pleased her very well.

The wedding festivities lasted eight days, and the dogs sat at the table too, with their eyes wide open.

“IT IS QUITE TRUE.”

“IT is a terrible business!” said a hen, and she said it in a part of the town where the affair had not happened. “It is a terrible business in the poultry-house! I could not sleep alone to-night; it is a good thing that there are a number of us here on the roost.” And she told a tale, which made the feathers of the hens stand on end, and the cock’s comb fall quite flat. It is quite true!

But we will start with the beginning, which happened in a poultry-house in another part of the town. The sun went down, and the hens flew up to roost. One of the hens had white feathers and short legs, and she laid the right number of eggs; she was a respectable hen in every way. When she came up on the roost, she pecked herself with her beak, and a little feather fell out.

“There it goes!” she said; “the more I peck myself the prettier I become.” And she said this in a joking way, for she was a wit among the fowls, though, as I have said before, very respectable; and then she fell asleep.

It was dark all around; one hen sat beside another, but the one who sat nearest to the hen who made the joke did not sleep; she listened, though she pretended to hear

nothing; just as everyone in this world should do who wishes to live in quiet. But she couldn't help telling it to her next neighbour.

"Did you hear what was said? I don't mention any names, but there is one hen who wants to peck out her feathers so as to look more beautiful. If I were a cock I should despise her."

And just above the fowls sat an owl, with her owl-husband and her owl-children, and they have sharp ears in that family. So they heard every word their neighbours had said, and they rolled their eyes, and the Mother Owl clapped her wings and said—

"Don't listen to it, but I suppose you heard what was said. I heard it with my own ears, and they will stand a deal of hearing before they fall off. There is one of the hens who has so completely forgotten what is becoming for a hen, that she sits and pecks all her feathers off, and lets the cock see her."

"Prenez-garde aux enfants," said Father Owl; "that is not fit for the children to hear."

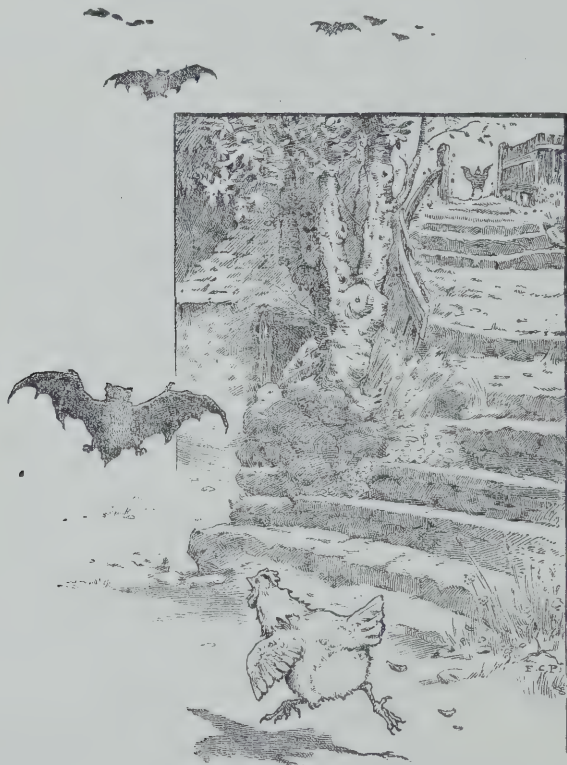
"But I must tell it to the neighbour owl," said Mother Owl; "she is such a respectable owl to associate with," and so she flew away.

"Hoo! hoo! too-whoo!" they both screeched down to the doves in the neighbour's dovecot, "have you heard it, have you heard it? Hoo! hoo! there is a hen who has pulled out all her feathers for the sake of the cock; she'll freeze to death, if she isn't dead already. Hoo! hoo!"

"Where? where?" cooed the doves.

"In the neighbour's yard. I have as good as seen it myself; it is scarcely a proper story to tell, but it is quite true."

"We believe it! we believe every word of it," said the doves, and cooed down into their own poultry yard: "There



"Let it go further!" piped the bats. (P. 211.)

is a hen, and some say there are two, who have pulled out all their feathers, that they may not look like the others, and thus attract the cock's attention. It is a dangerous thing to do, for one might catch cold and die of fever—and they are both dead."

"Wake up! wake up!" crowed the cock, and flew on to the fence; his eyes were still heavy with sleep, but he crowed all the same. "There are three hens that have died from an unfortunate attachment to a cock; they have plucked off all their feathers. It is indeed a dreadful story, and I won't keep it to myself: let it go further!"

"Let it go further!" piped the bats, and the hens cackled and the cocks crowed: "Let it go further! let it go further."

And so the story went from poultry-house to poultry-house, and at last it came back to the place from which it had first started:—

"There are five hens, they say, that have plucked off their feathers merely to prove which had grown thinnest through an unfortunate attachment to the cock; and they pecked at each other, and all fell down dead, to the shame and disgrace of the family, and the great loss of the proprietor."

And the hen who had lost the little loose feather did not of course recognise her own story, but, as she was a respectable hen, she said—

"I do despise those fowls, but there are many of that kind and one ought not to hush up such an affair. I will do my best to have the story put into the newspapers, so that it may travel all over the country, for the fowls and their family have deserved it!"

And so it got into the papers, and was printed.

And it is quite true: one little feather may easily grow into five fowls.

THE SNOW QUEEN.

A FAIRY TALE IN SEVEN STORIES.

FIRST STORY.

WHICH TREATS OF THE MIRROR AND ITS FRAGMENTS.

WELL, now let us begin. When we have got to the end of our story, we shall know more than we know now, for it was a wicked Goblin, it was one of the very worst—in fact, it was the Evil One himself!

One day he was in a really good humour, for he had made a mirror, which had the quality of causing everything good and beautiful that was reflected in it to shrink almost to nothing, whereas anything that was worthless and ugly became magnified and looked worse than ever. The most lovely landscapes appeared in this mirror like boiled spinach, and the handsomest people looked hideous, stood on their heads, and had no bodies. Their faces became distorted, so that it was impossible to recognise them, and if they had a freckle, it would be sure to spread out over their nose and mouth.

“It was exceedingly funny,” said the Goblin.

Now, when a good and pious thought passed through the mind of anyone, it was shown in the mirror as a grin, and the Goblin would laugh at his clever invention. All

those who attended his school—for he kept a goblin school—talked about it, and declared that a miracle had happened.

For the first time, they said, one could see what the world and mankind really looked like. They carried the mirror far and wide, until at last there was not a country nor a person that had not been distorted in it.

Then they wished to fly up to Heaven also, so as to make fun of the angels.

The higher they flew with the mirror, the more it grinned, so that they could hardly keep hold of it. Higher and higher they flew, nearer and nearer to Heaven; but suddenly the mirror trembled so violently with grinning that it flew out of their hands and dropped down to the earth, where it broke into a hundred million billion pieces and many more. Then it caused much more mischief than before, for some of the pieces were hardly as large as a grain of sand, and these flew around in the wide world, and when they got into the eyes of the people, there they remained. These people then saw everything reversed, or had only eyes for the wrong side of things, for every particle retained the same qualities as had previously been possessed by the entire mirror.

Some people even got a little fragment of the mirror into their hearts. This was very terrible indeed, for their hearts then became like a lump of ice. Some of the pieces were so large that they were used as window-panes, but it would be unwise to look through them at one's friends. Other pieces were put into spectacles, and it was a bad

thing for the people who put on those spectacles in order to see rightly and be just.

The Goblin laughed until his sides ached, so greatly was he tickled with all this mischief.

But in the air some small fragments of glass were floating about.

Now we shall hear something about them.

SECOND STORY.

A LITTLE BOY AND A LITTLE GIRL.

IN a large town, where there are so many houses and people that there is not room enough for everybody to have a little garden, and where for this reason most people must be satisfied with plants in flower-pots, lived two poor children who had a garden just a little larger than a flower-pot. They were not brother and sister, but they loved one another as much as if they had been. Their parents lived opposite each other, high up in two garrets. Where the roof of one house joined the roof of the other, only the gutter running between them, a little gable projected from each of the houses. You only had to step over the gutter to get from one window to the other.

Outside, the parents had each a large wooden box, and here grew the herbs for the kitchen and also a little rose-tree. There was one tree in each box, and they grew famously. The parents found out a way of placing the boxes across the gutter so that they reached almost from one window to the other, and looked quite charming—just like two flower-beds. The sweet-peas drooped over the

boxes, and the rose-trees put forth long branches, that interlaced with one another and climbed up against the windows. It was just like a triumphal arch of leaf and blossom. And as the boxes were very high, and the children knew that they must not climb up to them, they were often allowed to go out of the window to meet one another, and there, sitting on their little stools under the roses, they could play very nicely. In the winter this pleasure came to an end. The window-panes were often frozen all over; but they would warm pennies on the stove and put them against the frozen pane and thus they made a nice round peep-hole. Behind each hole twinkled a merry little eye, one from each window—the little boy's and the little girl's. His name was Kay, and her name was Gerda. In the summer-time they could get out to each other in one jump; but in the winter they had to run downstairs, and then up quite a number of steps. Outside, the snow was whirling about.

"It is the white bees that are swarming," said the old Grandmother.

"Have they also a queen-bee?" asked the little boy, for he knew that real bees have their queen.

"Oh, yes," said the Grandmother; "she flies about where the swarm is thickest. She is the largest of them all; she never falls to the earth, but floats back again into the black sky. Many a winter night she flies through the streets of the town and peeps in at the windows, and then these freeze in a wonderful way, just as though they were covered with flowers."

"Yes, I have seen that," said both children, and they knew it must be true.

"Can the Snow Queen come in here?" asked the little girl.

"Well, let her come," said the little boy; "I will put her on the warm stove, and then she will melt." But the Grandmother stroked his hair, and told them other stories.

In the evening, when little Kay was at home and half undressed, he crept up on to one of the chairs by the window, and looked out through the little hole. A couple of snowflakes were falling outside, and one of them remained lying on the edge of one of the flower-boxes. The snowflake grew larger and larger, until at last it became a little lady dressed in the finest white gauze, that seemed to consist of millions of star-like crystals. She was very beautiful and delicate, but of ice—of dazzling, glittering ice. And yet she was alive. Her eyes twinkled like two shining stars, but there was no peace or rest in them. She nodded towards the window and beckoned with her hand. The little boy grew frightened, and jumped down from the chair; and then it seemed that a great bird flew past outside the window. The next day there was a clear frost, and then it thawed.

The spring came, the sun shone, the green buds peeped forth, the swallows built their nests, the windows were opened, and the little children again sat in their own little garden in the gutter, on the roof, high up above all the other storeys.

The roses bloomed most beautifully that summer. The little girl had learned a hymn, and in this hymn roses were mentioned. This reminded her of her own roses, and she sang the hymn to the little boy, and he sang it with her:—

“Roses grow in the shady vale
And tell of the Christ-Child a beautiful tale.”

And the little ones held each other by the hand, kissed the roses, and looked up at God's bright sunshine and spoke to it as if the Christ-Child were there.

What beautiful summer days they were! How delightful it was to be out there by the fresh rose-trees, which seemed as if they would bloom for ever! Kay and Gerda sat and looked in the picture-book of animals and birds. Then it was—the clock in the big church tower was just striking five—that little Kay said—

“Oh! something struck me in my heart, and now I have something in my eye.” The little girl flung her arms round his neck; he blinked his eyes; but no, there was nothing to be seen. “I think it has gone,” he said, but it was not gone: it was just one of those little glass particles that sprang from the mirror, the magic mirror. We remember it well—the ugly glass that reflected everything grand and good as small and hideous, while all that was bad and ugly was magnified, and every fault could clearly be seen. Poor little Kay had also a grain in his heart, and that would soon become like a lump of ice. Now it no longer hurt him, but the grain was still there.

“What are you crying for?” he asked; “it makes you look ugly. Oh, fie!” he exclaimed all at once, “this rose is worm-eaten, and look, that one is crooked! They are really very ugly roses, just like the box they grow in.”

So he gave the box a hard kick with his foot, and tore the two roses off.

"Kay, what are you doing?" cried the little girl.

But when he saw how frightened she was he tore off yet another rose, and ran in through his window away from pretty little Gerda.

Then she went after him with the picture-book, but he said it was only for babies. When the Grandmother told stories, he always came in with a "but": and if he could get a chance, he would go behind her back, put her spectacles on, and imitate her. He did this very cleverly, and people laughed at him. Very soon he could imitate the talk and ways of everybody in the street; everything, that is, that was extraordinary, and not nice, and people said, "How very clever the boy is!" But it was all due to the fragment of the mirror that had fallen into his eye, and the other fragment that was in his heart. It was owing to this that he teased even little Gerda, who loved him with all her heart.

His games now became quite different from what they had formerly been—they were so sensible. One winter's day, when the snowflakes were whirling about, he took a large magnifying-glass, held up the end of his blue coat and let the flakes fall upon it.

"Now look in the glass, Gerda," he said. And every flake became much larger, and looked like a lovely flower, or a star with ten points. It was beautiful to look at!

"You see how curious they are," said Kay; "they are much more interesting than the real flowers, and there is not the slightest fault in them; they would be perfect if only they would not melt!"

Soon afterwards, Kay came in wearing thick gloves, and with his sleigh on his back. He called out to Gerda: "I have permission to go sleighing in the big square where the other boys play," and off he went. For in the square the boldest boys would often fasten their sleighs to the carts of the peasants, and ride with them quite a long distance. It was great fun!

Just as they were playing, a large sleigh came by. It was painted white, and inside sat somebody wrapped in white fur, and wearing a rough white hood. The sleigh drove twice round the square; Kay quickly tied to it his own little sleigh, and was carried away behind it. Off they went, travelling more and more quickly down the street. The driver turned round and nodded in a friendly way to Kay, just as if they knew one another. Whenever Kay thought of loosening his little sleigh the driver would nod again, and Kay stayed where he was. They drove out through the gates of the town, and then the snow began to fall, so thickly that the little boy could hardly see a yard before him as they swept along.

Then he tried to untie the string so as to get loose from the big sleigh, but it was of no use: his little sleigh was fast bound, and off they went with the swiftness of the wind. He cried aloud, but nobody heard him; the snow was whirling about, and the sleigh flew on. Now and then it gave a jerk—it was as if it were passing over ditches and hedges. Kay was quite frightened, and tried to say his prayers, but he could remember nothing except the multiplication-table.

The snowflakes became larger and larger; until at last they looked like great white fowls. All at once they flew aside, the big sleigh stopped, and the person who was driving it rose up; fur and cap were of pure snow. It was a lady, tall, and slender, and dazzlingly white—it was the Snow Queen!

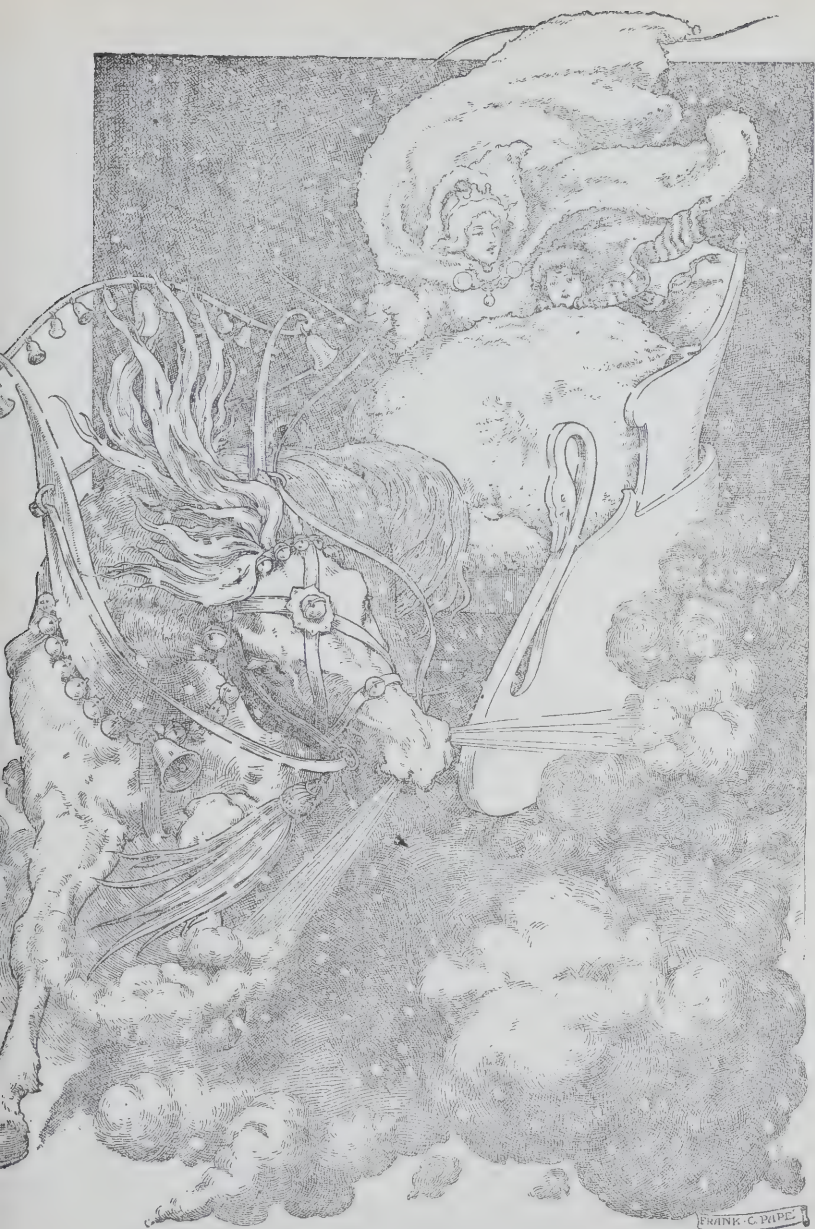
"We have driven well," she said, "but why do you shiver like that? Creep into my bearskin fur." She seated him in the sleigh beside her, wrapped the fur around him, and it seemed as if he had sunk down into a snowdrift. "Are you still shivering?" she asked, and kissed him on the brow. Ugh! her kiss was colder than ice: it went straight through to his heart, which was already half frozen to a lump of ice. Kay felt as if he were about to die, but only for a moment, for then he recovered and no longer noticed the cold around him.

"My sleigh! do not forget my sleigh!"

That was the first thing he remembered, and it was tied on to one of the white fowls, which flew behind with the sleigh on its back.

The Snow Queen kissed Kay once more, and then he forgot little Gerda, and the Grandmother, and all at home.

"Now you must have no more kisses," said the Snow Queen, "or I might kiss you to death." Kay looked at her: she was very beautiful—a more clever or a lovelier face he could not imagine. She did not seem to be made of ice, as she had appeared to be when she sat outside the window and beckoned to him. In his eyes she was perfect. He was not at all afraid; he told her that he could do mental arith-



Beneath them the cold wind was whistling, (P. 223.)

metic, even with fractions, and that he knew the number of square miles in the whole country, as well as the number of inhabitants, and she always smiled. Then it seemed to him that he did not know very much after all, and he looked up into the wide, wide sky, as she flew with him high up in a black cloud, while the storm roared and howled as if it were singing old songs. They flew over forests and lakes, over land and sea. Beneath them the cold wind was whistling, the wolves were howling, and over the glistening snow flew black, screaming crows. But beyond, the moon shone large and bright in the sky, and Kay gazed at it through the long, long winter night. In the daytime he slept at the feet of the Snow Queen.

THIRD STORY.

THE FLOWER-GARDEN OF THE WOMAN WHO KNEW CONJURING.

BUT how did little Gerda get on when Kay did not return? What had become of him? No one knew. No one could give any tidings. The boys could only say that they had seen him bind his sleigh to a very large one that drove into the street and out through the gate of the town. Nobody knew where he was; many tears were shed and little Gerda wept long and bitterly. Then they said he was dead—that he had been drowned in the river which flowed close by the town. Oh! how very long were those dark winter days!

Then came the spring, with warmer sunshine.

“Kay is dead and gone!” said little Gerda.

"I do not believe that!" said the sunshine.

"He is dead and gone!" she said to the swallows.

"We do not believe it!" they replied. And at last little Gerda herself did not believe it.

"I will put on my new red shoes," she said one morning, "the shoes that Kay has never seen, and then I will go down and beg the river to give him back." It was very early; she kissed the old Grandmother, who was still asleep, put on her red shoes, and went quite alone out of the town-gate down to the river.

"Is it true that you have taken my little playmate?" she said. "I will give you my red shoes if you will give him back to me."

She thought that the waves nodded to her strangely. Then she took her red shoes, the dearest of all her possessions, and threw them both into the river; but they fell close to the shore, and the little waves carried them back to her. It seemed as if the river would not accept her greatest treasure, because it had not taken little Kay; but she thought that perhaps she had not thrown the shoes far enough into the stream.

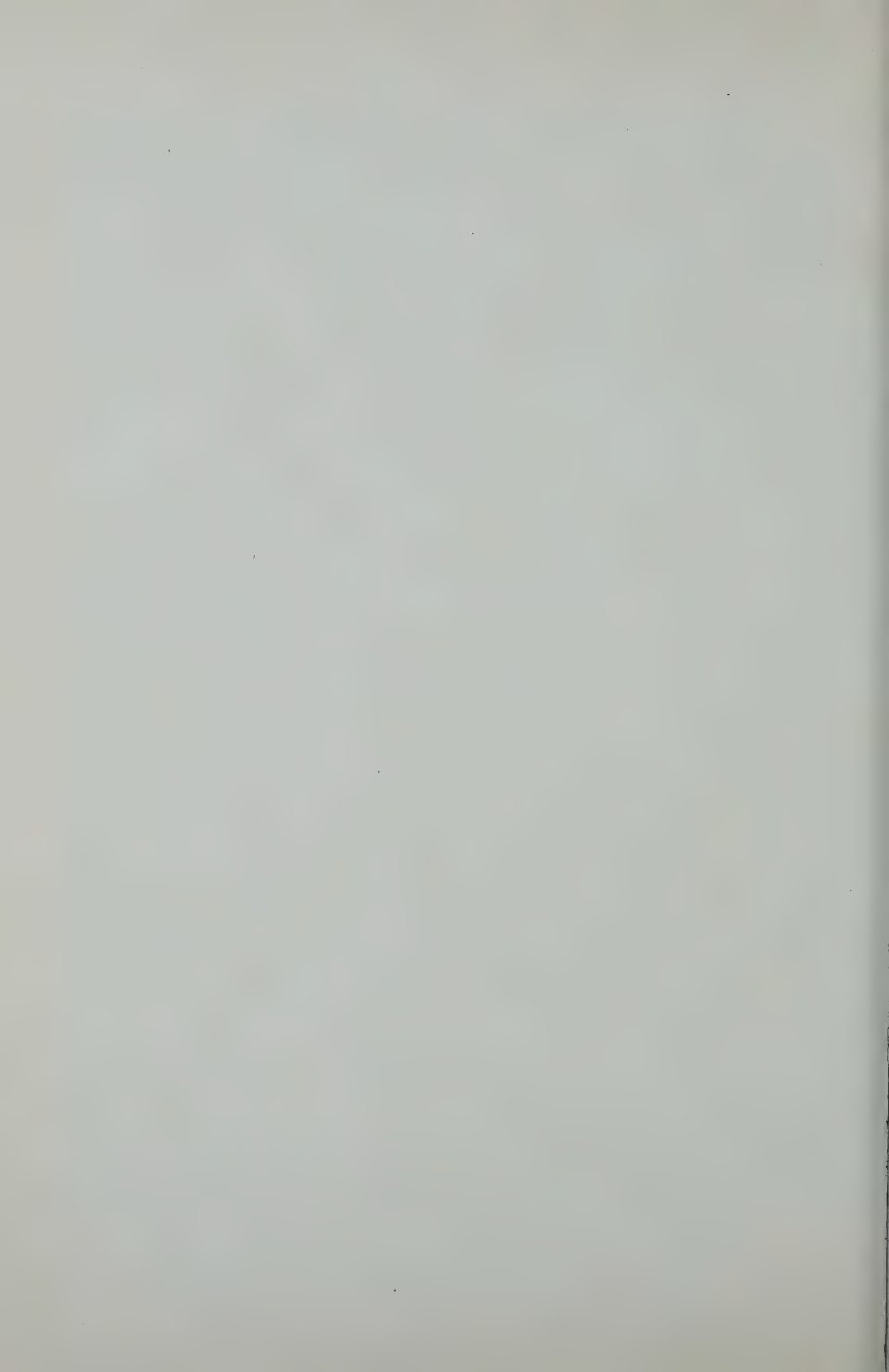
So she crept into a boat that lay among the reeds, went to the farther end, and threw the shoes out. But the boat was not fastened to the shore, and her movement caused it to glide away from the land. She noticed this, and hurried to get out, but before she could reach the end nearest to the shore, the boat was quite a yard away, and was drifting faster and faster with the current.

Little Gerda was now very much afraid, and began



"Poor little child! What brings you here?"

(The Snow Queen.)



to cry; but no one heard her except the sparrows, and they could not carry her to land; so they flew along the bank, and twittered as if to comfort her: "Here we are! here we are!"

The boat drifted with the stream, and little Gerda sat quite still, with only her stockings on her feet. Her little red shoes were floating on the water, but they could not overtake her, for the boat was leaving them farther and farther behind.

The banks on each side were very pretty. There were beautiful flowers, fine old trees, and slopes on which sheep and cows were grazing; but not a human being was to be seen.

"Perhaps the river will carry me to little Kay," thought Gerda. And so she grew more cheerful, sat up in the boat, and hour after hour watched the beautiful green banks. Then she came to a great cherry orchard, in which stood a little house with quaint red-and-blue windows, and a thatched roof.

Outside stood two wooden soldiers, who presented arms to those who sailed past. Gerda called out to them, for she thought they were alive, but of course they gave no answer. She approached very near to them, for the river carried the boat right up to the bank.

Then she called still louder, and an old woman came out of the house leaning on a crutch. She wore a large straw hat, on which the most beautiful flowers were painted.

"Poor little child!" she said, "what brings you here on this broad swift river, floating so far out into the wide world?"

And the old woman went straight down into the water, seized the boat with her crutch, drew it ashore, and lifted little Gerda out. The child was glad to be on dry land again, though she was a little afraid of the strange old woman.

"Come and tell me who you are, and how you came here," said the old lady. And Gerda told her everything; and the old woman shook her head and said, "H'm, h'm." When Gerda had told the whole story, and asked whether she had seen little Kay, the woman replied that he had not come yet, but that he would very probably pass that way. Meanwhile, she said, Gerda need not be anxious; she might taste her cherries, and look at her flowers, which were prettier than any picture-book, for each of them could tell a complete story.

Then the old woman took Gerda by the hand, led her into the little house, and locked the door.

The windows were very high and the panes were red, blue, and yellow; so that the light shone through in various colours; but on the table were some very fine cherries, and Gerda ate as many as she liked, for this she had permission to do. While she was eating them, the old woman combed her hair with a golden comb, so that the curls shone brightly round the sweet little face, which looked like a blush-rose.

"I have long wished for a dear little girl like you," said the old woman. "How nicely we two will get on together!" And as she combed little Gerda's hair, the child began to forget her little adopted brother Kay, for this old

woman knew conjuring, although she was not a wicked witch. She only conjured a little for her own amusement, and she was very anxious to keep little Gerda. So she went into the garden and pointed with her crutch at all the rose-trees; then, beautiful and blooming as they were, they sank immediately into the dark earth, and no one could tell where they had stood.

The old woman was afraid that when Gerda saw the roses, they would remind her of the roses at home, and that she would remember little Kay and run away.

Now she took Gerda out into the flower-garden. Oh! how fragrant and lovely it was! Every flower belonging to every season was there in full bloom; no picture-book could be richer in colour or more beautiful. Gerda jumped for joy, and played till the sun went down behind the tall cherry-trees; then she was tucked into a lovely bed with red-silk pillows stuffed with blue violets; and as she slept she dreamed as happily as any queen on her wedding-day.

When the morning came she was again allowed to play with the flowers in the warm sunshine—and thus many days went by. Gerda knew every flower; but although there were many of them, it seemed to her that one was missing—which one, she did not know. One day she sat looking at the old lady's hat with the painted flowers, and the very prettiest of them all was a rose.

The old lady had forgotten to remove it from her hat when she caused the other roses to disappear into the earth. But so it always happens if you do not keep your wits about you.

"Why!" said Gerda, "there are no roses here!"

And she ran in and out among the flower-beds, and searched and searched, but there was not a rose to be found.

Then she sat down and wept, and her warm tears fell just upon the spot where a Rose-tree lay buried. When her tears moistened the earth, the tree at once sprouted up as full of blossom as when it had sunk beneath the ground. Gerda embraced it, kissed the Roses, and thought of the beautiful roses at home, and of little Kay.

"Oh, how I have wasted my time!" said the little girl. "I came to find Kay! Do you know where he is?" she asked the Roses. "Do you believe he is dead and gone?"

"He is not dead," said the Roses; "we have been in the ground, where all dead people are, but Kay was not there."

"Thank you," said little Gerda, and she went to the other flowers, looked in their little cups, and asked: "Do you know where little Kay is?"

But every flower stood in the sun, dreaming her own fairy-tale. Many and many a story they told little Gerda, but none of them knew anything about Kay.

And what said the Tiger Lily?

"Do you hear the drum?—'Boom! boom!' There are only two notes, always 'Boom! boom!' Listen to the dirge of the women! hear the call of the priests! The Hindu widow stands in her long red robe on the pyre; the flames rise up around her and her dead husband; but the woman is thinking of the living one who is present, of him whose eyes shine more brightly, whose fiery glances burn into her

soul more ardently, than the flames which are soon to consume her body to ashes. Can the flame of the heart die in the flames of the funeral pile?"

"I do not understand it at all," said little Gerda.

"That is my story," said the Lily.

What said the *Convolvulus*?—

"Overhanging the narrow highway stands an ancient baronial castle; thick ivy is climbing leaf over leaf up the old red walls, as far as the balcony. Here stands a beautiful girl, bending over the balustrade, and looking into the road below. No rose hangs fresher from its branch than she; no apple-blossom wafted from the tree floats more lightly on the wind. Listen to the rustle of her rich silken robe! 'Is he not yet coming?' she says."

"Is it Kay whom you mean?" asked little Gerda.

"I am only telling my fairy-tale—my dream," replied the *Convolvulus*.

What said the *Snowdrop*?—

"Between two trees hangs a plank suspended by ropes; it is a swing. Two pretty little girls, in dresses as white as snow, and with long green silken ribbons fluttering from their hats, are sitting swinging. Their brother, taller than they, stands up in the swing, and has wound his arm around the rope to steady himself, for in one hand he holds a little cup, and in the other a clay pipe; he is blowing soap-bubbles. The swing moves to and fro, and the bubbles rise into the air with beautiful ever-changing colours; the last one still hangs from the pipe-bowl, swaying in the breeze. The swing moves to and fro. A little black dog, light as

the bubbles, stands up on his hind legs and tries to reach the swing; it moves on, the dog falls, barks angrily at being teased, and the bubbles burst. A swinging plank, the picture of a bursting bubble—that is my song.”

“That may be, and what you tell me is very pretty, but you speak very sadly, and you do not mention little Kay at all.”

What said the Hyacinths?—

“There were three beautiful sisters, transparent and delicate. The dress of the first was red, of the second, blue, and of the third, white. Hand in hand they danced in the bright moonlight, by the shore of a calm lake. They were not elf-maidens, but human children. There was a sweet fragrance in the air, the girls disappeared into the forest—the fragrance became stronger. Three coffins, in which lay three beautiful maidens, glided from the thickest part of the forest across the lake; fire-flies shone in the air like small floating lights. Do the dancing-girls sleep, or are they dead? The flower-scent says that they have ceased to live; the evening-bell tolls for the dead.”

“You make me quite sorrowful,” said little Gerda. “Your perfume is so strong that I cannot help thinking of the poor dead maidens! Oh! is little Kay really dead? The Roses have been down in the earth, and they say that he is not!”

“Ding-dong!” rang the Hyacinth bells; “we toll not for little Kay—we know him not; we sing our own song, the only one we know.”

And Gerda went to the Buttercup, which was gleaming

through the fresh green leaves. "You are a bright little sun!" said Gerda; "tell me if you know where I can find my playmate!"

And the Buttercup shone brightly, and looked at little Gerda again. What song could the Buttercup sing? It was not about little Kay.—

"In a little back-yard the dear old sun was shining cheerfully, on the first day of spring. His rays were streaming down the neighbour's white wall; close by, the first yellow flowers were blooming, sparkling like gold in the warm sunshine. Old Grandmother was out in her chair; her granddaughter, the poor and pretty servant-maid, came home on a short visit; she kissed the Grandmother. There was gold in the blessed kiss—gold in the mouth, gold in the heart, gold in the early morning hour. That is my little story," said the Buttercup.

"My poor old Grandmother!" sighed Gerda. "How she must long for me, and be as sorry for me as she was for little Kay! But I will soon come back, and then I will bring Kay with me. It is of no use to ask the flowers—they only know their own song; they can give me no good advice."

And then she lifted up her little frock so as to run more quickly, but the Narcissus struck her on the leg as she passed by. Then she stopped, looked at the tall flower, and asked: "Do you, perhaps, know anything?" and bent quite down to the flower. And what did it say?

"I can see myself! I can see myself!" said the Narcissus. "Oh! what a beautiful perfume I have! High

up in a garret stands a half-dressed ballet-girl. She stands now on one leg, now on both, and kicks at all the world; she is only an illusion. She is pouring water from the teapot over a piece of stuff which she is holding—it is her bodice. Cleanliness is a good thing! On a peg hangs a white skirt, which has also been washed in the teapot and



Oh! How grey and gloomy it seemed out in the wide world. (P. 233.)

dried on the roof. She puts it on, and ties her saffron handkerchief round her neck, and the dress looks whiter than before. One leg in the air!—see how straight she stands on one stalk! I can see myself; I can see myself!”

“I don’t care a bit about that,” said Gerda; “that is nothing to me!” And so she ran away to the far end of

the garden. The door was locked, but she pulled at the rusty hinges until they gave way; the door sprang open, and little Gerda ran barefoot out into the wide world. She looked behind her three times, but nobody followed her.

At last she could run no longer, and sat down on a big stone, and when she looked round, the summer was gone. It was late in the autumn, but she had not noticed this in the beautiful garden, where there was always sunshine, and the flowers of every season were in bloom.

"Oh, dear," she said, "how I have wasted my time! It is now autumn, and I must not rest," and she rose up to go.

Alas! how sore and weary were her little feet. Everything around her looked cold and rough; the long willow leaves were quite yellow, and the mist dropped from them like water—one after another the leaves were falling. Only the sloe-tree still bore fruit, but it was so sour that it set the teeth on edge.

Oh! how grey and gloomy it seemed out in the wide world!

FOURTH STORY.

THE PRINCE AND THE PRINCESS.

GERDA had to rest again. Suddenly a big Crow came hopping across the snow, just opposite to where she sat. He had been sitting a long while looking at her, turning his head to and fro; but now he said, "Caw! caw! Good day! good day!" He could not speak more plainly, but he meant to be kind to the little girl, and asked where she was going all alone out in the wide world.

The word "alone" Gerda understood very well: she quite felt the meaning of it; so she told the Crow the whole story of her life and adventures, and asked if he had seen Kay.

The Crow nodded very gravely, and said—

"That may be! that may be!"

"What! do you think so?" cried the little girl, and she nearly squeezed the Crow to death, so heartily did she kiss him.

"Gently, gently!" said the Crow. "I believe it may be little Kay, but by this time he must have forgotten you for the Princess."

"Does he live with a Princess?" asked Gerda.

"Yes; listen," said the Crow. "But it is very difficult for me to speak your language. If you knew the Crow language, I could tell you much better."

"No, I never learned that," said Gerda; "but Grandmother knew it, and other languages too. If only I had learned it!"

"It doesn't matter," said the Crow. "I will tell you the story as well as I can, but it will be bad at the best."

And so the Crow told what he knew:—

"In the kingdom where we now are, lives a Princess who is very, very learned. She has read all the newspapers that exist in the world, and has forgotten them again, so very learned is she. One day she was sitting on the throne—and they say that is not so very pleasant after all—when she happened to sing a song, which was just this:—

"Why should I not married be?"

“‘Now, there is something in that,’ she said. So she wished to marry, but she had first to find a husband who could answer when he was spoken to, one who could do more than merely look handsome, for that is so tiresome. Then she summoned all her maids-of-honour by beat of drum, and when they heard her intention they were highly delighted. ‘It is a capital idea,’ said each of them; ‘I thought of the very same thing the other day!’ You may be certain that every word I am telling you is true,” added the Crow, “for I have a tame sweetheart who hops about as she pleases in the castle, and she has told me everything.” She was, of course, also a Crow—this sweetheart, for birds of a feather flock together.

“The newspapers immediately appeared with a border of hearts and the Princess’s signature. It was announced that every young man who was good-looking might come to the castle and speak with the Princess, who would choose for her husband the one whose conversation showed that he felt most at his ease. Yes, yes,” said the Crow, “you may believe me; it’s as true as I am sitting here. People came flocking in; there was a great crowding and much running to and fro, but no one succeeded on the first or second day.

“They could all speak very well when they were out in the street, but when they passed through the palace gates, and saw the Guards all in silver, and the lackeys in gold on the staircase, and the great rooms brilliantly lighted up, they became quite confused. And when they stood before the throne, on which the Princess sat, they had nothing

whatever to say, but merely repeated the last word she had spoken, which, of course, she had no particular wish to hear over again. It was just as if the people in there had taken—let us say—snuff, and fallen asleep; but as soon as they found themselves in the street again, they were able to talk easily enough. There was quite a procession, all the way from the town-gate to the palace. I went myself to see it,” said the Crow. “They were hungry and thirsty, but in the palace they did not receive so much as a glass of lukewarm water. Some of the wisest had, of course, brought bread-and-butter with them, but nobody would share anything with his neighbour, for he thought: ‘If he looks hungry, the Princess won’t have him.’”

“But Kay, little Kay?” asked Gerda. “When did he come? Was he among the crowd?”

“Wait a minute. We’re just coming to him. It was on the third day there came a little fellow, without horse or carriage, marching quite pluckily up to the castle. His eyes sparkled like yours, he had beautiful long hair, but his clothes were very poor.”

“That was Kay!” cried Gerda, in great delight. “Oh, then I have found him!” And she clapped her hands.

“He had a little knapsack on his back,” said the Crow.

“No, that must have been his sleigh,” said Gerda, “for he went away with a sleigh.”

“That may be,” said the Crow; “I did not take much notice. But this much I know from my tame sweetheart that when he passed through the palace gate and saw the Life Guards in silver, and mounted the staircase and saw

the lackeys in gold, he was not in the least confused. He nodded, and said to them: 'It must be tiresome to stand on the stairs—I'd rather go in.' The halls were glittering with light; Privy Counsellors and Excellencies walked about with bare feet, carrying golden vessels; it was enough to make one feel serious; and his boots creaked most awfully, but he was not frightened in the least."

"That is certainly Kay!" cried Gerda. "He had new boots on; I've heard them creak in Grandmother's room."

"Well, they did creak," said the Crow. "And he went boldly up to the Princess herself, who sat on a pearl as big as a spinning-wheel; and all the maids-of-honour with their maids and their maids' servants, and all the cavaliers with their pages and their pages' valets, who in turn kept their men-servants, were standing around, and the nearer they stood to the door, the prouder they looked. The pages' valets and men-servants, who always wore slippers, one could hardly bear to look at, so proudly did they stand in the doorway!"

"That must have been terrible!" said little Gerda. "And yet Kay won the Princess?"

"If I had not been a Crow I would have married her myself, although I am engaged. They say he spoke as well as I do when I speak the Crow's language; I heard that from my tame sweetheart. He was merry and handsome; he had not come to woo the Princess, but only to learn how wise she was; and he was pleased with her, and she with him."

"Well, of course it was Kay!" said Gerda. "He was

so clever—he could do mental arithmetic up to fractions. Oh! will you not lead me to the castle, too?”

“That is easily said,” replied the Crow. “But how are we to manage it? I will talk it over with my tame sweetheart; she may be able to help us; but I must tell you this—a little girl like you will never get permission to go right in.”

“Yes, I shall,” said Gerda. “When Kay hears that I am here he will come out at once, and bring me in.”

“Wait for me yonder at the grating,” said the Crow, and he wagged his head and flew away.

It was not until late in the evening, when it had grown dark, that the Crow returned.

“Caw! caw!” he said. “My sweetheart sends you greeting, and here is a little loaf for you. She took it from the kitchen. There is plenty of bread there, and you must be hungry. It is impossible for you to get into the palace, for you are barefoot, and the Guards in silver and the lackeys in gold would never allow it. But don’t cry; you shall go up all the same. My sweetheart knows a little back staircase that leads up to the bedroom, and she knows, too, where she can get the key.”

And they went into the garden, through the grand avenue, where the leaves were falling one after another; and when the lights were put out in the palace one by one, the Crow led Gerda to a back door, which stood half-open.

Oh! how Gerda’s heart beat with fear and longing! It seemed as if she were going to do something wicked; and yet she only wanted to know if it were little Kay.

Yes, it must be he! How well she remembered his bright eyes and his long hair; she fancied he would be glad to see her; to hear what a long way she had come for his sake; and to know how sorry they all were at home when he did not come back. Oh, how her heart beat with fear and joy!



It seemed like shadows along the wall. (P. 240.)

Now they were on the staircase. A little lamp was burning in an alcove, and in the middle of the floor stood the tame Crow, turning her head from side to side and looking at Gerda, who bowed as Grandmother had taught her.

"My betrothed has spoken of you, my little lady," said the tame Crow. "Your 'Vita' as we may call it, is very touching. Will you take the lamp, and I will lead the way? We will go straight on, for then we shall meet nobody."

"It seems to me as if someone were coming just behind us," said Gerda, as something rushed by her; it seemed like shadows along the wall; horses with flying manes and slender legs, huntsmen and ladies and gentlemen on horseback.

"They are only the Dreams," said the Crow; "they come to take their Highnesses' thoughts out hunting. It is a good thing too, for you will have a better chance of looking at them in bed. But remember, if you rise to honour and favour, to show a grateful heart."

"What is the good of talking of that?" said the Crow from the wood.

They now came into the first hall. It was hung with rose-coloured satin, and its walls were decorated with artificial flowers. Here the Dreams again came flitting by, and they moved so quickly that Gerda could not see the great folk who were there. Each of the halls was more splendid than the other; it was enough to bewilder one. Now at last they were in the bedchamber. Here the ceiling looked like a great palm-tree with leaves of glass—of costly glass; and in the middle of the floor two beds were hanging on a thick stalk of gold, and each of them looked like a lily. One was white, and in that lay the Princess; the other was red, and here Gerda expected to find little Kay. She drew one of the red leaves aside, and then she saw a little brown neck—oh! that must be Kay! She called his name aloud,

and held the lamp towards him—the Dreams rushed into the room, again on horseback; he awoke, turned his head, and—it was not little Kay!

The Prince was only like him in the neck; but nevertheless he was young and handsome. The Princess looked out from the white lily, and asked who was there. Then little Gerda wept, and told the whole of her story, and all that the Crows had done for her.

“You poor little child!” said the Prince and Princess.

And they praised the Crows, and declared that they were not angry with them at all, but they were not to do it again. However, they should be rewarded.

“Would you sooner fly about in freedom?” asked the Princess, “or would you prefer fixed appointments as Court Crows, with the right to everything that is left in the kitchen?”

And the two Crows bowed, and asked for fixed appointments, for they thought of their old age, and said: “It is good to have something for our old days.”

And the Prince got up out of his bed, and let Gerda sleep in it; and more than that he could not do. She folded her little hands, and thought: “How good men and animals are!” And then she closed her eyes and fell quietly to sleep. All the Dreams came flying in again, looking like angels, and they drew a little sleigh, on which Kay sat, nodding; but all this was only a dream, and therefore it vanished as soon as she awoke.

The next day she was dressed from head to foot in silk and velvet; and they invited her to stay in the castle

and enjoy herself. But she only begged for a little carriage with a horse, and a little pair of boots; then she would drive out again into the wide world to find Kay.

And they gave her not only boots, but a muff as well—she was quite smartly dressed; and when she was ready to depart, a new coach of pure gold drew up before the door. The coat-of-arms of the Prince and Princess shone from it like a star, and coachman, footmen, and outriders—for there were outriders too—had golden crowns on their heads.

The Prince and Princess in person helped her into the carriage, and wished her all good fortune. The forest Crow, who was now married, accompanied her for the first three miles. He sat by Gerda's side, for he could not bear riding with his back to the horses. The other Crow stood in the doorway flapping her wings; she did not go with them, for she had suffered from headache ever since she obtained a fixed appointment and had too much to eat. Inside, the coach was lined with sugar-plums, and on the seat there were fruit and ginger biscuits.

"Farewell! farewell!" cried the Prince and Princess, and little Gerda wept, and the Crow wept. So they went on for the first three miles; then the Crow also said good-bye, and this was the most sorrowful parting of all. The Crow flew up on a tree, and beat his black wings as long as he could see the coach, which glittered like the rays of the sun.

FIFTH STORY.

THE LITTLE ROBBER-GIRL.

THEY drove on through the dark forest, but the coach gleamed like a torch, dazzling the robbers' eyes, and they could not resist the temptation.

"That is gold! that is gold!" they cried, rushed forward, and seized the horses, killed the little outriders, coachman, and footmen, and then pulled little Gerda out of the carriage.

"She is fat—she is pretty—she is fed with nut-kernels!" said the old robber-woman, who had a long beard, and eyebrows that hung down over her eyes. "She is as good as a little pet lamb; how nice she will taste." Saying this, she drew forth a shining knife, that gleamed horribly.

"Oh!" screamed the old woman at the same moment, for she was bitten in the ear by her own little daughter, whom she carried on her back, and who was very wild and naughty. "You ugly thing!" said the mother; and she had not time to kill Gerda.

"She shall play with me," said the little robber-girl. "She shall give me her muff, and her pretty dress, and sleep with me in my bed!" and she bit her mother again, so that the robber-woman jumped high in the air, and twirled right round, and all the robbers laughed, and said: "Look how she dances with her kid."

"I want to get into the carriage," said the little robber-girl, and she would have her own way, for she was terribly

spoiled, and very obstinate. She and Gerda sat in the carriage, and drove over stock and stone deep into the forest. The little robber-girl was as big as Gerda, but stronger, had broader shoulders, and a dark skin; her eyes were quite black, and looked almost mournful. She clasped little Gerda round the waist, and said: "They shall not kill you as long as I do not get angry with you. You are surely a Princess?"

"No," replied Gerda. And she told her all that had happened to her, and how fond she was of little Kay.

The robber-girl looked at her quite seriously, nodded slightly, and said: "They shall not kill you, even if I do get angry with you, for then I will do it myself," and she dried Gerda's eyes, and put both her own hands into the beautiful muff that was so soft and warm.

Now the carriage stopped; they were in the middle of the courtyard in the robbers' castle. It was cracked from top to bottom; ravens and crows flew out of the gaping holes; and big bulldogs, each of which looked as if he could swallow a man, were jumping high into the air; but they did not bark, for that was forbidden.

In the great old smoky hall a bright fire was burning in the middle of the stone floor. The smoke passed along under the roof, and had to find its way out as best it could. In a huge cauldron the soup was boiling, and hares and rabbits were roasting on the spit.

"You shall sleep here to-night with me and with all my little animals," said the robber-girl.

They ate and drank, and then went to a corner where straw and carpets were spread out. Above, on laths and

perches, nearly a hundred pigeons were sitting; they all seemed asleep, but they turned a little when the two little girls approached.

"They are all mine," said the little robber-girl; and she quickly seized one of the nearest, held it by its feet, and shook it so that it flapped its wings. "Kiss it!" she cried, and flapped it in Gerda's face. "There sit the wood-pigeons," she continued, pointing to a hole in the wall across which a number of laths had been nailed. "They are wood rascals, those two; they would fly away at once if they were not kept well locked up. And here's my old sweetheart 'Ba'; and she pulled a Reindeer out by the horn. It had a polished copper ring round its neck, and was tied up. "We are obliged to tie him up well, or he would run away from us. Every evening I tickle his neck with my sharp knife; he is greatly afraid of that."

And the little girl drew a long knife from a cleft in the wall, and let it glide over the Reindeer's neck. The poor creature kicked out with its legs, and the little robber-girl laughed, and drew Gerda into bed with her.

"Do you keep the knife while you are asleep?" asked Gerda, looking at it with alarm.

"I always sleep with a knife," replied the robber-girl. "One never knows what may happen. But now tell me again what you told me before about little Kay, and why you came out into the wide world."

And Gerda told it again from the beginning; and the wood-pigeons cooed up in their cage, but the other pigeons slept. The little robber-girl put her arm round Gerda's neck,

held her knife in the other hand, and slept so that one could hear her; but Gerda could not close her eyes at all—she did not know whether she was to live or die.

The robbers were sitting round the fire, singing and drinking, and the old robber-woman reeled about. It was quite terrible for a little girl to look at.

Then the wood-pigeons said: "Cool! cool! we have seen little Kay. A white hen was carrying his sleigh; he sat in the Snow Queen's carriage, which rushed away high above the forest, when we were lying in our nest. She blew upon us little ones, and all died except us two. Cool! cool!"

"What are you saying up there?" cried Gerda. "Which way was the Snow Queen travelling? Do you know anything about it?"

"She was probably going to Lapland, for there they always have ice and snow. Ask the Reindeer which is tied by the cord."

"There is ice and snow there; it is a beautiful country," said the Reindeer. "You can run about as you please in the deep gleaming valleys. There the Snow Queen has her summer tent; but her real castle is up towards the North Pole, on the island called Spitzbergen."

"Oh, Kay! little Kay!" sighed Gerda.

"You must lie still," said the robber-girl, "or I will thrust my knife into you."

In the morning Gerda told her all that the wood-pigeons had said, and the robber-girl looked quite grave, but nodded her head and said: "It's all the same; it's all the same! Do you know where Lapland is?" she asked the Reindeer.

"Who should know better than I?" the animal replied. "I was born and bred there; I ran about there in the snow-fields," and its eyes sparkled.

"Listen!" said the robber-girl to Gerda. "All our men, as you see, are gone away. Only mother is here still, and she will stay; but later in the morning she will drink out of the big bottle, and sleep for a little while; then I'll do something for you."

She sprang out of bed, clasped her arms round her mother's neck and pulled her beard, crying, "Good morning, my own old nanny-goat." And her mother filliped her nose till it was red and blue; but it was all done in pure love.

When the mother had drunk out of her bottle and had gone to sleep, the robber-girl went to the Reindeer and said—

"I should like to tickle you many a time yet with the knife, for you are so very funny then. But never mind, I will loosen your rope, and help you out, so that you may run to Lapland: but you must make good use of your legs, and carry this little girl for me to the palace of the Snow Queen, where her playfellow is. I suppose you have heard what she told me, for she spoke loud enough, and you are fond of listening."

The Reindeer sprang up with joy. The robber-girl lifted little Gerda on to its back, and took care to tie her fast, and even gave her a little cushion to sit on.

"There are your fur boots," she said, "for it will be cold; but I will keep the muff, for it is really too pretty. However, you shall not be cold, for here are mother's big

mittens—they reach quite up to your elbows. Put them on; there, now your hands look just like my ugly old mother's."

And Gerda wept for joy.

"I can't bear to see you weep," said the little robber-girl. "Now you must look happy. And here are two loaves and a ham for you, so that you may not be hungry." These were tied on the Reindeer's back. The little robber-girl opened the door, coaxed in all the big dogs, then cut the rope with her sharp knife, and said to the Reindeer: "Now run! but take care of the little girl!"

And Gerda stretched out her hands with the big mittens towards the little robber-girl, and said, "Farewell!"

And the Reindeer ran over stock and stone, away through the great forest, over marshes and steppes. "Hiss! hiss!" it said in the sky. It seemed as if it were sneezing red flames.

"Those are my old Northern Lights," said the Reindeer. "See how they glow!" And then it ran on faster than ever, day and night.

The loaves were eaten, and the ham as well, and then they found themselves in Lapland.

SIXTH STORY.

THE LAPLAND WOMAN AND THE FINLAND WOMAN.

THEY stopped at a little hut. It was very mean-looking; the roof sloped down to the ground, and the door was so low that the family had to creep on their hands and knees when they wanted to get in or out. Nobody was at home but an old Lapland woman, frying fish by the light

of a train-oil lamp; and the Reindeer told Gerda's whole history; but first it told its own, for this seemed to the Reindeer the more important. Gerda was so exhausted by the cold that she could not speak.

"Oh! you poor things," said the Lapland woman; "you have a long run yet! You must go more than a hundred



They stopped at a little hut. (P. 248.)

miles into Finland, for the Snow Queen is staying there in the country, burning Bengal lights every evening. I will write a few words on a dry cod, for I have no paper, and I will give you that to take to the Finland woman; she can give you better information than I."

When Gerda had warmed herself and had something

to eat and drink, the Lapland woman wrote a few words on a dry codfish, told Gerda to take care of it, and tied her on the Reindeer, which then ran on again. "Flash! flash!" it said high in the air; and the most beautiful Northern Lights glowed throughout the whole of the night. And so they got to Finland, and knocked at the chimney of the Finland woman, for she had not even a door.

It was so hot inside that the woman herself went about almost naked. She was very small, and always grumbling. She at once loosened little Gerda's dress and took off the child's mittens and boots; otherwise it would have been too hot for her. She laid a piece of ice on the Reindeer's head, and then she read what was written on the codfish. Three times she read it through, and then she knew it by heart; so she popped the fish into the saucepan, for it was good to eat, and she never wasted anything.

Then the Reindeer told his own story, and afterwards little Gerda's; and the Finland woman blinked with her clever eyes; but said nothing. "You are so learned," said the Reindeer; "I know you can tie all the winds of the world together with a bit of sewing-thread: if the sailor unties one knot, he has a good wind; if he loosens the second, it blows hard; but if he unties the third and the fourth, then comes a storm fierce enough to uproot the trees in the forest. Can you not give the little girl a draught, so that she may have the power of twelve men, and overcome the Snow Queen?"

"Twelve men's power!" repeated the Finland woman. "Much use that would be!" And she went to a shelf, and

took down a large rolled-up skin, and untied it. Wonderful characters were written upon it, and the Finland woman read till the water streamed down her forehead.

But the Reindeer again begged so hard for little Gerda, and Gerda looked so earnestly at the Finland woman, with such pleading, tearful eyes, that her own began to blink again. She drew the Reindeer into a corner, and whispered to him, while she laid fresh ice upon his head: "Little Kay is certainly at the Snow Queen's and very much pleased he is to be there. He thinks it is the best place in the world; but that is because he has a splinter of glass in his heart and a little grain of glass in his eye. These must be got out, or he will never become a human being again, and the Snow Queen will retain her power over him."

"But can you not present little Gerda with something that will give her power over them all?"

"I can give her no greater power than she has already. Don't you see how great that is?—don't you see how men and animals are obliged to serve her, and how well she got on in the world even with bare feet? She must not learn to know her power through us; it is in her heart, and consists in this—that she is a sweet, innocent child. If she cannot, by herself, gain access to the Snow Queen and remove the glass fragments from little Kay, we cannot help her. Two miles from here the Snow Queen's garden begins; you can carry the little girl there, and set her down by the great bush that stands with its red berries in the snow. Don't stay gossiping, but make haste, and get back here."

And then the Finland woman lifted little Gerda on to the Reindeer, which ran as fast as it could.

"Oh, I haven't my boots, and I haven't my mittens!" cried little Gerda. She felt the want of them in the cutting cold: but the Reindeer dared not stop. It ran on until it came to the great bush with the red berries; here it put Gerda down, kissed her mouth, and great bright tears rolled down over the animal's cheeks. Then it ran back as fast as it could.

There stood poor Gerda, without shoes, without gloves, in the middle of this desolate, ice-cold Finland.

She ran forward as fast as possible. There came a whole regiment of snowflakes; but they did not fall down from above, for the sky was quite bright, and shone with the Northern Lights: the snowflakes ran along the ground, and the nearer they came the larger they seemed. Gerda remembered how large and wonderful the snowflakes had appeared when she looked at them through the magnifying-glass, but here they were different—large and quite terrible—for they were alive: they were the sentries of the Snow Queen, and had the strangest shapes. Some looked like great, hideous porcupines, others like knots of snakes stretching forth their heads, and others like little fat bears, with their hair standing on end. They were all brilliantly white; they were all living snowflakes.

Then little Gerda said her prayers; but the cold was so great that she could see her own breath: it came from her mouth like smoke. The breath became thicker and thicker, and formed itself into little transparent angels, who

grew larger and larger as they touched the earth; all had helmets on their heads, and shields and spears in their hands. They became more and more numerous, and when Gerda had finished her prayer a whole legion stood around her. They struck with their spears at the terrible snow-flakes, shattering them into a hundred pieces; and little Gerda went on quite safely and bravely. The angels stroked her hands and feet, so that she felt the cold less than before, and she hastened on to the Snow Queen's palace.

But now we must see how Kay was getting on. He certainly was not thinking of little Gerda, and least of all, that she was standing outside the palace.

SEVENTH STORY.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SNOW QUEEN'S PALACE, AND AFTERWARDS.

THE walls of the palace were formed of the drifting snow, and the windows and doors of the cutting winds. There were more than a hundred halls, and the greatest extended for several miles, just as the snow drifted. All were illuminated by the strong Northern Lights, and how great and empty, how icily cold and glittering they were! There was never any merriment, not even so much as a little bears' ball, at which the storm could have played the music, and the white bears could have walked about on their hind legs and shown off their pretty manners; never any little game of snapdragon or touch; never a little bit of tea-table gossip among the young lady white foxes. Empty, vast, and cold were the halls of the Snow Queen!

The Northern Lights shone so evenly that one could tell when they rose to their highest or sank to their lowest. In the midst of this vast empty snow-hall was a frozen lake, that had burst into a thousand pieces; but each piece was so exactly like the others that it was a perfect work of art, and in the centre of the lake, when she was at home, sat the Snow Queen. She was wont to say that she sat in "the Mirror of Reason," and that this was the only one, and the best in the world.

Little Kay was quite blue with cold—indeed, almost black; but he did not notice it, for the Snow Queen had kissed the cold shudderings away from him, and his heart was like a lump of ice. He was dragging about some sharp flat pieces of ice, and joining them together in all possible ways, as if he wished to make something out of them—just as when we have little tablets of wood, and place them together to form figures in what we call "the Chinese puzzle." Kay also made figures, and most wonderful ones they were. He was playing the game of Reason. In his eyes these figures were very remarkable and of the highest importance; but that was because of the grain of glass sticking in his eye. He laid out the figures so as to form a word—but he could never manage to get the word he wanted—the word "Eternity." And the Snow Queen had said: "If you can find out this figure, you shall become your own master, and I will give you the whole world, and a new pair of skates." But he could not.

"Now I must haste away to warmer lands," said the Snow Queen. "I will go and look down into the black pots." These were the volcanoes, Etna and Vesuvius, as

they are called. "I shall make them a little white! That is necessary; it will be good for the lemons and grapes."

And so the Snow Queen flew away, and Kay sat quite alone in the great icy hall, which was a mile in length, and looked at the pieces of ice, and thought, and thought, so that he cracked as if he were breaking. So stiff and still did he sit that one might have thought that he was frozen to death.

At this moment little Gerda stepped through the great gate into the palace. Cutting winds were raging within, but she said her evening prayer, and the winds were lulled to rest. Then she entered the vast halls that were so cold and empty. She beheld Kay, knew him at once, threw her arms around his neck, and, holding him fast, called out: "Kay, dear little Kay! at last I have found you!"

But he sat quite motionless, stiff and cold. Then little Gerda wept hot tears; they fell upon his breast; they penetrated into his heart, and thawed the lump of ice, melting even the little piece of glass within it.

He looked at her, and she sang the hymn:—

"Roses grow in the shady vale,
And tell of the Christ-Child a beautiful tale."

Then Kay burst into tears; and he wept so much that the splinter of glass came out of his eye. He recognised her, and cried in delight: "Gerda! dear Gerda! where have you been all this time? And where have I been?" And he looked all around him. "How cold it is here! how large and empty!"

And he clung to Gerda, and she laughed and wept

for joy. It was so beautiful that even the pieces of ice danced about; and when they were tired and lay down, they formed themselves into the very letters which the Snow Queen had told Kay he must find if he wished to be free, and for which she would give him the whole world and a new pair of skates.

And Gerda kissed his cheeks, and they grew rosy again; she kissed his eyes, and they shone like her own; she kissed his hands and feet, and he became healthy and cheerful. The Snow Queen might now come home—his letter of freedom stood written in shining characters of ice. And they took each other by the hand, and wandered out from the great palace. They talked of Grandmother, and the roses of the roof; and wherever they went the winds lay down and the sun burst forth. When they reached the bush with the red berries, the Reindeer was standing there waiting; it had brought another Reindeer, whose udders were full, and who gave the little ones its warm milk, and kissed them. Then they carried Kay and Gerda, first to the Finland woman, where they warmed themselves in the hot room, and received instructions for their journey home, and then to the Lapland woman, who had made them new clothes and put her sleigh in order.

The Reindeer and his companion ran by their side, and followed them as far as the boundary of the country. Here, where the first green leaves were sprouting, Kay and Gerda took leave of the Reindeer and the Lapland woman. "Farewell!" they said.

The first little birds of spring began to twitter, and

the forest trees were in bud. Suddenly a young girl came riding out of the wood on a splendid horse which Gerda knew (for it was the one that had drawn her golden coach). She had a shining red cap on her head and a pair of pistols in front of her. This was the little robber-girl, who was tired of staying at home, and wanted to go first to the North, and then, if that did not satisfy her, to some



Gerda and Kay went hand in hand. (P. 258.)

other region. She knew Gerda at once, and Gerda knew her too; it was a joyful meeting. "You are a fine fellow to go a-gadding!" she said to little Kay. "I wonder whether you deserve that anyone should run to the end of the world for your sake." And Gerda patted her on the cheek, and asked after the Prince and Princess.

"They have gone to foreign countries," said the robber-girl.

"But the Crow?" said Gerda.

"Why, the Crow is dead," she replied. "The tame sweetheart is now a widow, and goes about with a bit of black worsted round her leg. She complains bitterly, but it is nothing but talk. But now tell me how you have fared, and how you got hold of him."

And Gerda and Kay both told their story.

"Snipp-snapp-snurre-purre-base-llurre!" said the robber-girl.

And she took them both by the hand, and promised that if ever she came through their town, she would come up and pay them a visit. And then she rode away into the wide world.

But Gerda and Kay went hand in hand, and as they wandered on, the flowers of spring burst forth, and all the world was clad in green. The church bells pealed, and they recognised the high steeples and the great town; it was the one in which they lived. They went to the Grandmother's door, up the stairs, and into the room, where everything remained in its usual place. The grandfather's clock said, "Tick! tack!" and the hands were moving; but as Kay and Gerda passed through the door they noticed that they were now grown-up.

The roses out on the roof were blooming at the open windows; there stood the children's chairs, and Kay and Gerda sat down, and held each other by the hand. They had forgotten the cold empty splendour of the Snow Queen's palace—it was now like a painful dream. The Grandmother was sitting in God's bright sunshine, reading aloud out of

the Bible:—"Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God."

And Kay and Gerda looked into each other's eyes, and all at once they understood the old hymn:—

"Roses grow in the shady vale,

And tell of the Christ-Child a beautiful tale."

There they both sat, grown up, and yet children—children in heart—and it was summer, warm, beautiful summer.

THE SHIRT COLLAR.

THERE was once a fine gentleman whose only effects consisted of a Boot-jack and a Hair-Comb; but he had the finest Shirt-Collar in the world, and it is about the Shirt-Collar that we shall hear a story. The Shirt-Collar was old enough now to think of getting married, and it so happened that he was sent to the wash together with a Garter. "Well," said the Shirt-Collar, "I have never seen anything so slender and delicate as you. May I ask you your name?"

"I shall not tell you," said the Garter.

"Where is your home?" asked the Shirt-Collar; but the Garter was very shy, and she thought it a strange question to answer.

"Now I presume you are a Girdle," said the Shirt-Collar, "a kind of under-girdle. I see you are both useful and ornamental, my little lady."

"You must not talk to me," said the Garter; "I do not think that you have a right to do so."

"But when one is as beautiful as you are," said the Shirt-Collar, "it seems to me that is reason enough."

"Don't come so near me," said the Garter; "you look to me quite like a man."

"But I am a fine gentleman, too," said the Shirt-Collar; "I have a Boot-jack and a Hair-Comb."

This was not true, for they belonged to his master, but he was boasting.

"Don't come near me," said the Garter; "I am not used to it."

"Silly girl," said the Shirt-Collar. So they were taken out of the wash, were starched and hung on the chair in



So they were hung on the chair in the sunshine. (P. 261.)

the sunshine, and then laid on the ironing-board. And now came the hot Iron.

"Madam," said the Shirt-Collar, "little widow, I am getting quite hot, I am getting quite changed, my creases

are disappearing—you are burning a hole in me! I will propose to you.”

“Rag!” said the Iron, and went proudly over the Shirt-Collar, for it thought it was an engine, and should be on the railway, drawing carriages. “Rag!” it said.

The Shirt-Collar was frayed a little at the edges, so a pair of Scissors came to cut away the frayed pieces.

“Oh!” said the Shirt-Collar, “you must be a dancing girl. How easily you move your limbs! You are the most marvellous thing that I have ever seen; no human being can equal you.”

“I know that,” said the Scissors.

“You deserve to be a Countess,” said the Shirt-Collar. “All that I possess is a Boot-jack and a Hair-Comb, and the rank of a fine gentleman. If only I had an estate!”

“What! are you proposing?” said the Scissors, becoming angry; and they gave him such a deep cut that the Collar had to be thrown away.

“Well, I shall have to propose to the Hair-Comb,” said the Shirt-Collar. “It is wonderful how you keep your teeth, miss; have you never thought of getting engaged?”

“Well, I should have thought you knew,” said the Hair-Comb; “I am engaged to the Boot-jack.”

“Engaged!” said the Shirt-Collar.

There was now no one left to whom he could propose, so he despised the whole lot of them.

A long time went by, and the Shirt-Collar came into a box at the paper-mills. There was a large company of rags, the fine ones by themselves, and the coarse ones also

by themselves, just as it should be. Each of them had a great deal to say, but the Collar most of all, for he was a very braggart among the Rags.

"I have had a terrible number of sweethearts," said the Shirt-Collar; "indeed, they would never leave me in peace. I was a fine gentleman, and was starched, and I had both a Boot-jack and a Hair-Comb, which I never used. You should have seen me at that time, when I was turned down. I shall never forget my first sweetheart: she was a little Girdle, fine and delicate; she threw herself into the bath for my sake. There was also a widow, who was red hot in love with me, but I left her alone until she turned quite black. Then there was a dancing lady, who gave me a wound from which I now suffer—she was so ill-tempered. My own Hair-Comb was in love with me, and she lost all her teeth through unrequited affection. Yes, I was loved by too many, but I am most sorry for the Garter—I mean the Girdle—that went into the washtub. I have a deal on my conscience, and it is about time that I was turned into white paper."

And this was what happened to him. The Rags were made into white paper, but the Shirt-Collar became just the white piece of paper on which this story is printed. It was all because he bragged so terribly about things that had never happened. We should be careful not to follow his example, for we can never tell whether we also may not get into the rag-bag, be turned into white paper, have our whole history, even the most secret, printed upon it, and be obliged to run about and tell it, as was the case with the Shirt-Collar.

“WHAT FATHER DOES IS ALWAYS RIGHT.”

I WILL now tell you a story, which I heard when I was a little boy. Every time I have thought of this story, it has seemed to me to become more and more beautiful; for it is with stories as it is with many people; they become prettier as they grow older, and that is very charming!

I have no doubt that you have been out in the country, and have seen a real old farmhouse, with a thatched roof, and moss, and plants growing wild upon it. There is a stork's nest on the ridge, for one cannot very well do without the stork; the walls are sloping, the windows low, and there is only one among them that is made to open; the baking-oven projects from the wall like a fat little body. The elder-tree hangs over the fence, and there is a little pool of water, with a duck and her ducklings, beneath some old willow-trees. There is also, of course, a dog that barks at everybody who passes by.

Just such an old farm-house stood out in the country, and there lived an old couple, a peasant and his wife. Little though they had, there was one thing they could not do without, and that was the horse, that found a living by grazing on the roadside.

Father rode on it to town, and the neighbours borrowed it, rendering services of some kind in return; but the old couple thought it might perhaps be better for them to sell the horse or exchange it for something more useful.

"You will know best, father, what this something should be," said the wife. "To-day is market-day in town; ride down there and sell the horse or make a good exchange. What you do is always right—so ride to the market."

So she wrapped his muffler around him, for she could do this better than he, and tied it in a double knot, so that it looked very smart; then she brushed his hat with the palm of her hand, and gave him a hearty kiss. So he rode away on the horse that was about to be sold or exchanged. Yes; father knew what he was about!

The sun beat fiercely down, there were no clouds to be seen, and the road was very dusty. Many people were going to market, some in carts, some on horseback, and some on their own legs.

The heat was stifling, and there was no shade on the road.

A man came along, leading a cow—as pretty a cow as one could wish to see.

"She must give good milk, I am sure," thought the peasant; "it would be a very good exchange to get her for the horse. Hullo there! you with the cow!" he cried, "let us have a little chat. Of course, a horse costs more than a cow, but I don't mind that; I happen to have more use for the cow—shall we make an exchange?"

"All right," said the man with the cow, and so they exchanged.

Now that the bargain was made, the peasant might have returned home, for he had finished his business; but, as he had made up his mind to go to market, he thought he might as well do so, if only to see what was going on; so off he walked with his cow.

He walked quickly, and the cow walked quickly, and so they soon overtook a man who was leading a sheep. It was a fine sheep, in good condition, and with plenty of wool.

"Now, that is just the thing I should like to have," thought the peasant. "There is plenty of grass for it by the roadside, and in the winter we could take it into the room with us. As a matter of fact, it would be more suitable for us to keep a sheep than a cow. Shall we exchange?" he said.

The man with the sheep was quite willing; so the exchange was made.

The peasant went along the road with his sheep, and at the stile he met a man with a big goose under his arm.

"That is a heavy bird you have there," said the peasant, "with plenty of feather and fat. It would look capital tied with a piece of string by the pond. It would be something for the wife to save the potato peelings for. She has so often said: 'If we only had a goose!' and now she can get one, and she shall have it. Shall we exchange? I will give you the sheep for the goose, and thank you into the bargain," said the peasant. The other man was quite willing, and so they exchanged, and the peasant got the goose.

He was now close to the town. The crowd on the road became greater, and there was a crush and a rush of

men and cattle. They were walking on the road and by the roadside, and at the turnpike-gate they walked even in the toll-man's potato-field, where a hen was strutting about with a string tied to her leg, in order that she should not go astray in the crowd and so get lost. It was a nice fat hen, it winked with one eye, and looked very artful. "Cluck! cluck!" it said; what it thought, when saying it, I do not know; but the peasant thought, as he saw the hen—

"Now, that is the nicest hen I have ever seen. She is finer than our parson's hen. I should like to have her. A hen can always pick up something; she can almost keep herself. I think it would be a good exchange if I got her for the goose. Shall we exchange?" he said.

"Exchange!" said the other; "that wouldn't be so bad." So they exchanged: the toll-man got the goose, and the peasant got the hen.

He had done a good deal of business on his way to town; it was very hot, and he was very tired; he would be all the better for a drink and a piece of bread, and now he was at the inn.

He was going in, and the innkeeper was going out, so they met in the doorway.

The innkeeper carried a big sack of something.

"What have you there?" said the peasant.

"Rotten apples!" answered the man; "a whole sackful for the pigs."

"Oh, that is a rare lot; I should like mother to see them. Last year we had only one single apple on the old tree by the peat-house; this apple we kept on the top of the

cupboard until it cracked. 'Well, it is always property,' said mother; but here she could see any quantity of property; yes, I should like to show them to her."

"Well, what will you give for them?" asked the man.

"What will I give? I'll give my hen in exchange," and so he gave his hen in exchange, got the apples, went into the inn, and up to the bar. He placed his sack with the apples against the stove; but the stove was heated, and he had not thought of this.

Many strangers were present in the room, horse-dealers, ox drivers, and two Englishmen, and Englishmen are so rich that their pockets bulge out with gold coins.

And they make bets, as you shall hear.

"Hiss! hiss!" What was that noise over there by the stove?

The apples were beginning to roast.

"What is it?"

Well, they soon heard the whole story—how the horse was exchanged for the cow, and so on, down to the rotten apples.

"Well, your good wife will give it to you when you get home," said the Englishmen; "there will be a row."

"Not at all," said the peasant; "she will give me a kiss, instead of scolding me, and she will say: 'What father does is always right.'"

"Shall we bet," said the Englishmen, "a barrel of gold coins—a hundred pounds to a hundredweight?"

"It is quite enough to make it a bushelful," said the peasant; "I can only set the bushel of apples against it; but

I will throw myself and the wife into the bargain, and that, I should say, is good measure!"

"Done!" they said; and so the bet was made.

The innkeeper's carriage came up, and the Englishmen got in, the peasant got in, and the rotten apples got in, and away they all went to the peasant's house.

"Good evening, mother!"

"Good evening, father!"

"I have made the exchange."

"Well, you understand what you are about," said the woman, and she embraced him, and forgot all about the sack and the strangers.

"I have exchanged the horse for a cow."

"Oh, how nice to get milk!" said the wife; "now we can have butter and cheese on the table; that was indeed a capital exchange!"

"Yes, but I exchanged the cow for a sheep."

"Well, that is perhaps better," said the wife; "you always think of everything. We have just enough pasture for a sheep; ewe's milk, and cheese, and woollen socks, and a woollen jacket—the cow cannot give these, and her hairs only come off. How you do think of everything, to be sure!"

"But the sheep I exchanged for a goose."

"Are we really going to have roast goose for Christmas this year, father dear? You are always thinking of something to please me. This is a capital idea of yours; the goose can be tied to a string, and we will fatten her for Christmas!"

"But I exchanged the goose for a hen," said the old man.

"A hen! oh, that was a good bargain!" said the woman
"a hen lays eggs, and hatches them, and so we can ge



"I must really kiss you!" said the woman. (P. 271.)

chickens—a whole poultry-yard—and that's the very thing
have always wished for."

"Yes; but the hen I exchanged for a sack of rotten
apples!"

"Now, I must really kiss you!" said the woman

"Thank you, thank you, my dear old man! Now I'll tell you something: when you were gone, I thought I would make a nice meal for you—pancakes with onions. The eggs I had, but I had no onions, so I went over to the school-master's—they have onions, I know, but the wife is mean, poor thing. I asked her to lend me some. 'Lend!' she said; 'there is nothing that grows in our garden that I could lend you—not even a rotten apple.' But now I can lend her ten, or a whole sackful—that is really nice, father," and with this she gave him a sounding kiss.

"Well, that is capital!" exclaimed both Englishmen; "always going downhill, and yet always cheerful; it is worth the money." So they paid a hundredweight of gold to the peasant who was not scolded, but kissed.

Yes; it always pays when the wife sees and acknowledges that father knows best—that what he does is always right.

Now, that is my story. I heard it when I was a little boy, and now you have heard it too, and know that "what father does is always right."

THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE CHIMNEY SWEEP.

HAVE you ever seen a very old wooden cupboard, quite black with age, and carved with arabesques and foliage? Just such a cupboard stood in the parlour; it was a legacy from Grandmother, and it was carved from the top to bottom with roses and tulips. There were the most wonderful flourishes upon it, and between these projected little stags' heads. But in the middle of the cupboard there was carved the whole figure of a man. He was very funny to look at, for he was grinning—you could not call it laughing—and he had a goat's legs, little horns on his forehead, and a long beard. The little children in the room always called him Major-and-Lieutenant-General-War-Commander-Sergeant Billy-goat-legs; this was a very difficult name to pronounce, and there are not many who receive this title, but it was remarkable that he had been carved out at all. There he sat, always looking at the table under the mirror, upon which stood a pretty little Shepherdess made of porcelain. Her shoes were gilded, her skirt daintily trimmed at the side with a red bow, she wore a golden hat, and carried a shepherd's crook; she was indeed quite lovely!

Close beside her stood a little Chimney-Sweep, as black

as a coal, but also made of porcelain. He was, however, just as clean and neat as anyone else, for he only represented a chimney-sweep: the modeller might just as well have made him a prince.

There he stood with his ladder, looking very nice, with



his face as white and pink as a girl's. This was really a fault, for he ought to have been just a little black. He was standing very close to the Shepherdess; they had been placed there, had become engaged to one another, and suited each other very well, for they were both young, both were made

An old Chinaman, who could nod his head. (P. 273.)

of the same porcelain, and both were equally brittle.

Close to them stood another figure, which was three times as big as they—an old Chinaman, who could nod his head. He also was made of porcelain, and pretended to be the grandfather of the little Shepherdess, but he could not prove it. He declared that he had authority over her,

and he therefore nodded to the Major-and-Lieutenant-General-War-Commander-Sergeant Billy-goat-legs, who was proposing to the little Shepherdess.

"There is a husband for you," said the old Chinaman, "a husband who I believe, is made of mahogany, and who can make you Mrs. Major-and-Lieutenant-General-War-Commander-Sergeant Billy-goat-legs. He possesses a whole cupboard full of silver plate, besides what he has in the secret drawers."

"Oh, I do not want to get into that dark cupboard," said the little Shepherdess; "I have heard them say that he has eleven porcelain wives in there!"

"Then you will be number twelve," answered the Chinaman: "to-night, when the old cupboard begins to creak, you shall get married, as true as I am a Chinaman," and he nodded his head, and fell asleep.

But the little Shepherdess wept, and looked at her heart's beloved, the porcelain Chimney-Sweep.

"I beg of you," said she, "to take me with you out into the wide world, for we cannot remain here."

"I will do whatever you like," said the little Chimney-Sweep: "let us go at once; I think I can maintain you by following my profession!"

"I wish we were safely down from the table," she said; "I shall never be happy until we are out in the wide world."

But he comforted her, and showed her where to put her little foot on the carved edge and gilt foliage of the table-leg. Then he brought his ladder to help her, and so

they got down on to the floor. But when they looked towards the old cupboard, there was a fearful commotion; all the little carved stags stretched forth and craned their necks to and fro; Major-and-Lieutenant-General-War-Commander-Sergeant Billy-goat-legs sprang high in the air, and cried out to the old Chinaman: "They are running away! they are running away!" This frightened them, so they jumped hurriedly up into the drawer.

Here lay three or four packs of cards, but they were not complete, and there was also a little puppet-show, which was fixed up as well as it could be. There was a performance at the theatre, and all the Queens—diamonds, hearts, clubs, and spades—were sitting in the front row fanning themselves with tulips, while behind them stood the Knaves, with heads both above and below, as is usual with playing-cards. The play was about two people who were crossed in love, and the little Shepherdess cried, because it was just like her own story.

"Oh, I cannot bear this," said she; "I must get out of the drawer!" But when they reached the floor again, and looked up at the table, the old Chinaman was awake, and rocking his whole body to and fro, for his legs were only one big lump. "Now the old Chinaman is coming," cried the little Shepherdess, and she fell down on her little porcelain knees, so frightened was she.

"I have an idea," said the Chimney-Sweep: "let us creep down into the big potpourri-vase, which stands over in the corner; there we can lie on roses and lavender, and when he comes we can throw salt in his eyes."

"That is of no use," she said; "besides, the old Chinaman and the potpourri-vase were once engaged, and some little affection always remains when people have occupied that relation to one another. No, there is nothing for us to do but to go out into the wide world!"

"Have you really courage to go with me out into the wide world?" asked the Chimney-Sweep. "Have you considered how wide the world is, and that we can never come back here again?"

"I have," said she.

The Chimney-Sweep looked at her very earnestly, and said: "My way lies through the chimney; if you really have courage to creep with me through the stove and up through the pipe, we shall get up into the chimney. Then I shall know how to find my way; we can mount so high that they cannot catch us, and at the very top there is a hole leading into the wide world."

And he led her to the stove door.

"It looks very black there," said she; but she went with him through the stove and the pipe, although it was pitch dark.

"Now we are in the chimney," he said, "and look! look! up above a beautiful star is shining!"

It was a real star in the sky, shining straight down to them as if it wanted to show them their way. They clambered and scrambled up, and a terribly long way it was; but he lifted her up and helped her, holding her hand, and showing her the best places to put her little porcelain feet; and at last they reached the edge of the chimney.



They sat down, for they were very tired. (P. 277.)

There they sat down, for they were very tired, and no wonder.

The sky, with all its stars, was high above them, and

the roofs of the town were far below. They could see a long way around, far out into the world. The poor little Shepherdess had never dreamed that it would be like this, and she laid her little head on the shoulder of the Chimney-Sweep and wept so that the gold ran off her belt. "It is far too much," she said; "I cannot bear it: the world is too large. If only I were back again on the little table under the mirror! I shall never feel happy until I am there again. Now that I have followed you out into the wide world, you must take me home again, if you really love me."

The Chimney-Sweep tried to encourage her, reminding her of the old Chinaman and Major-and-Lieutenant-General-War-Commander-Sergeant Billy-goat-legs; but she sobbed so bitterly, and kissed her little Chimney-Sweep so tenderly, that he could not help yielding to her, though he knew it was foolish.

So they clambered down again through the chimney with great difficulty, crept through the pipe, which was not at all pleasant, and at last found themselves in the dark stove. Here they listened behind the door, to find out what was going on in the room. It was very quiet, so they peeped in. Alas! there in the middle of the floor, lay the old Chinaman! He had fallen down from the table in pursuing them, and he lay there broken into three pieces. The back had broken off in one piece, and the head had rolled over into the corner; but Major-and-Lieutenant-General-War-Commander-Sergeant Billy-goat-legs stood in his usual place, lost in thought.

"This is dreadful," said the little Shepherdess; "old

grandfather is broken to pieces, and it is our fault. I shall never survive it," and she wrung her tiny little hands.

"He can still be mended," said the Chimney-Sweep, "he can easily be mended, so pray calm yourself. When they have glued his back together, and given him a good rivet in his head, he will be as good as new again, and will yet live to tell us many disagreeable things."

"Do you think so?" she said; and they crept up on to the table where they had been standing before.

"We did not get very far," said the Chimney-Sweep; "we might have saved ourselves all that trouble."

"If only grandfather were riveted!" said the Shepherdess; "I wonder if it is dear?"

And riveted he was. The family had his back glued together, and they put a strong rivet in his neck, so that he was as good as new; but he could no longer nod.

"You have become very conceited since you were broken to pieces," said Major-and-Lieutenant-General-War-Commander-Sergeant Billy-goat-legs; "it seems to me that it is nothing to be proud of. Am I to have the Shepherdess, or am I not?"

The Chimney-Sweep and the little Shepherdess looked piteously at the old Chinaman. They were terribly afraid that he would nod; but he was unable to do this, and as it was disagreeable for him to tell a stranger that he had a rivet in his neck, the two little porcelain people were allowed to remain together. They blessed the old grandfather's rivet, and loved one another until they broke.

A GREAT SORROW.

THE story we now are telling is really a story in two parts. The first part might very well be left out, but it explains several things which it may be useful to know.

We were staying out in the country at a large farmhouse, and it happened that the residents went away for the day. In the meantime, a lady called from the nearest town; she had her little pug dog with her, and she came, she said, to dispose of some shares in her tannery. She brought her papers with her, and we advised her to put them in an envelope and address it to the proprietor: "General War Commissary Knight," etc. She listened attentively, took hold of the pen, but stopped and asked us to repeat the address very slowly. We did so, and she began to write; but in the middle of "General War Commissary" she stopped, sighed, and said: "I am only a woman."

The pug dog which she had put on the floor whilst she was writing, began to growl; he had indeed been taken out for his pleasure, and for the benefit of his health, and therefore it was not polite to put him on the floor. As far as his outward appearance went, he was very fat, and had a snub nose.

"He does not bite," said the lady, "he has no teeth. He is quite like one of the family, very faithful, but with a bad temper, for my grandchildren tease him so much. They play at 'weddings' and want to make him a bridesmaid, and this is very tiresome for him, poor fellow," and she left her papers and went away, taking the pug on her arm.

This is the first part, which might very well have been left out.

Puggie died! This is the second part.

It was about a week afterwards that we arrived in the town and put up at the Inn. Our windows overlooked the courtyard, which was divided into two parts by a wooden partition: in one half hung a number of skins and hides, both raw and tanned. There were all kinds of material for tanning, and this was the property of the widow.

The pug had died that very morning, and was buried in the yard. The grandchildren of the widow—that is to say, of the tanner's widow, for the pug had not been married—were filling up the grave. It was a beautiful grave, and it must have been quite pleasant to lie there. The grave was bordered with pieces of flower-pots, and strewn over with sand, and on the top they had put half a beer-bottle, with the neck uppermost; this certainly was not at all allegorical.

The children were dancing round the grave, and the eldest of the boys, a practical youngster of seven, proposed that there should be an exhibition of the pug's grave, and that all the children from the street should be invited to



She covered her eyes with her little brown hands and burst into tears.

(P. 283.)

attend. The price of admission was to be a trouser button which every boy was sure to possess, while the boys could also pay for the little girls; so the proposal was accepted unanimously. All the children from the street and the lane came and gave their buttons; many of them had to go at that afternoon with only one button, but then they had seen Puggie's grave, and that was a sight worth seeing.

But outside the tan-yard, close to the entrance, stood a very pretty little girl, clothed in rags, with the most beautiful curly hair, and eyes so blue and clear that it was a pleasure to look into them. She did not speak a word nor did she cry, but she peeped in as far as she could whenever the door was opened. She had not a button—she knew it full well, and therefore she had to stand out

side, full of grief. There she stood until all the children had seen the grave and gone away; then she sat down, covered her eyes with her little brown hands, and burst into tears. She alone had not seen Puggie's grave; it was a grief as great to her as any grown-up person could experience. We saw this from above; this, as well as many a grief of our own and of others would make us smile if looked at from above!

This is the story, and whoever does not understand it may take shares in the widow's tannery

THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL.

IT was terribly cold; the snow was falling, and it began to grow dark, for the evening was coming on, and it was the last evening of the year—New Year's Eve. In the cold and darkness, a poor little girl, with bare head and naked feet, was walking along the street. She certainly had had slippers on when she left home, but of what use were they? They were large slippers—in fact, her mother had used them, so big were they; and the little girl had lost them when she ran across the street, for two big wagons came rattling by at a terrible rate. One of the slippers she couldn't find; and a little boy ran about with the other, saying that it would make a capital cradle when he had children of his own. So now the child walked along with her little naked feet, which were red and blue with cold. In an old apron she carried a number of matches, holding one bundle in her hand. Nobody had bought anything of her the whole day long, nobody had given her a single penny. Shivering with cold and hunger, she crept along, looking oh! so miserable, poor little thing! The snowflakes fell upon her long fair hair, that hung in pretty curls around her neck, but she did not think of this now.

By-and-by all the windows were lit up, and in the street there was a delicious smell of roast goose; for it was New Year's Eve—yes, she remembered that. In a corner

formed by two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sat down, huddling herself together. She drew her little legs up under her; but she grew colder still, and she dared not go home: for she had sold no matches—had not earned a single penny. Her father would beat her, and, besides, it was cold at home: they had nothing over them but the roof, through which the wind came whistling, although the largest holes were filled up with straw and rags. Her little hands were nearly dead with cold.

Ah! a match might do her some good, if only she could draw one out of the bundle and rub it against the wall, just to warm her fingers. She drew one out. Fizz! how it sputtered and burned; there was a warm flame, just like a tiny candle, as she held her hands over it; it was a wonderful little light. It seemed to the little girl that she sat in front of a large open stove, with polished brass feet and a brass cover. How beautifully the fire burned, and how warm it was! Ah! what was that?—the little one stretched out her tiny feet to warm them also; when suddenly the flame went out, the stove vanished, and she sat with the stump of a burnt match in her hand.

She struck a new one: it burned up, and as the light fell upon the wall, it became as transparent as a veil. She could see into a room where a table was spread with a white table-cloth, and upon it stood a fine dinner service. What a savoury smell came from the roast goose, stuffed with dried plums and apples! But, even more delightful, the goose jumped down from the dish, and waddled along the floor with a knife and fork in its beak, straight towards

the little girl. Then the match went out, and there was nothing to be seen but the cold thick wall.

She lit another match, and saw a most beautiful Christmas-tree, larger and more richly bedecked than that which she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant's last Christmas. Thousands of candles were shining from its green branches, and many-coloured pictures, just like those



She saw a most beautiful Christmas tree. (P. 286.)

shown in the shop windows, looked down upon her. The little girl stretched out both her hands, but the match went out.

The flames of the many Christmas candles rose higher and higher, and she saw that they were now twinkling stars. One of them fell, and left behind it a long streak of fire in the sky. "Now someone is dying," said the little one. Her old Grandmother, who was the only person who had

been kind to her, and who was now dead, had once said: "When a star falls, a soul goes up to God."

She struck another match against the wall. It lit up everything around, and in the brightness, quite clearly and distinctly, stood her old Grandmother, looking upon her mildly and lovingly.

"Grandmother," cried the little one, "take me with you! I know you will go when the match is burned out, and vanish like the warm stove, the delicious roast goose, and the big, beautiful Christmas-tree," and she hastily struck the whole bundle of matches, wishing to hold her Grandmother fast. The matches shone with a radiance brighter than daylight; Grandmother had never before seemed so grand and so beautiful. She lifted the little girl in her arms, and they floated upward in joy and happiness, high, so very high, where there was no cold, no hunger, no sorrow. They were with God. But in the corner by the house sat the little girl in the cold morning light, with red cheeks and smiling lips—dead, frozen to death on the last evening of the Old Year!

New Year's morning dawned over the little dead child. There she sat, in the stiffness of death, still holding the matches, of which one bundle was nearly burned.

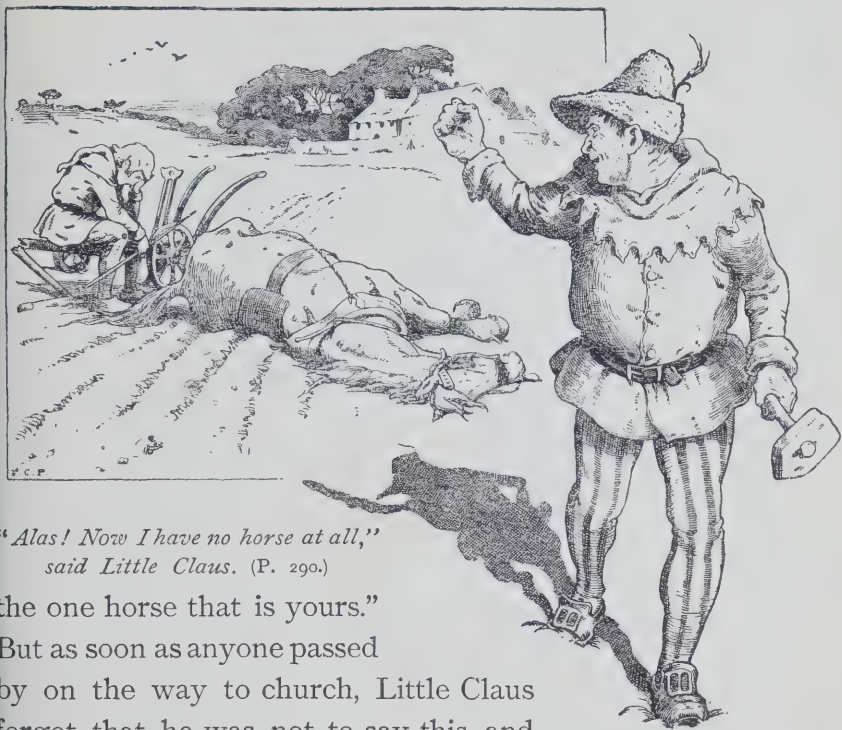
"She wanted to warm herself," they said. But no one knew what beautiful things she had seen—with what glory she had gone with her Grandmother into the happiness of the New Year.

LITTLE CLAUS AND BIG CLAUS.

THERE lived two men in a village, and they had the same name—both were called Claus; but one had four horses, and the other only one. To distinguish them, they called the one who had four horses, Big Claus, and the one who had only one horse, Little Claus. Now we shall hear what happened to these two, for this is a true story.

The whole week through, Little Claus had to plough for Big Claus, and lend him his one horse; then Big Claus would help him in return, with his four horses, but only once a week, and that was on the Sunday. Hurrah! how Little Claus cracked his whip over all the five horses, for on that one day they were as good as his own! The sun shone so brightly, and all the bells in the steeple were ringing to church; the people were dressed in their best, and went, with their hymn-books under their arms, to hear the parson preach. They looked at Little Claus, who was ploughing with his five horses, and he was so pleased that he cracked his whip, and cried out: "Gee up, all my horses!"

"You must not say that," said Big Claus; "it is only



"Alas! Now I have no horse at all,"
said Little Claus. (P. 290.)

the one horse that is yours."

But as soon as anyone passed
by on the way to church, Little Claus
forgot that he was not to say this, and
again he cried out: "Gee up, all my horses!"

"Now I must warn you not to say that again," said
Big Claus, "for if you do, I shall hit your horse on the
head, so that he will fall down dead on the spot, and there
will be an end of him."

"No; I will not say it any more," said Little Claus.
But when the people passed by, and nodded "good day"
to him, he was so pleased, and he thought it looked so fine
to have five horses to plough his field, that he cracked his
whip, and again called out: "Gee up, all my horses!"

"I'll 'gee up' your horses!" said Big Claus, and he took

a club, and hit Little Claus's only horse on the head, so that it fell down dead.

"Alas! now I have no horse at all," said Little Claus, and began to cry. Then he flayed the horse and took the hide, let it dry well in the wind, put it in a bag, which he hung over his shoulder, and went to town to sell the skin.

He had a long way to go, and had to pass through a great wood, and as the weather grew very bad, he lost his way altogether. Before he found it again, night began to fall, and it was too late either to go to the town, or return home again, before dark.

Close by the road stood a large farmhouse; the shutters were closed outside the windows, but a light could still be seen, shining through at the top.

"I may be able to stay here overnight," thought Little Claus, and he knocked at the door.

The farmer's wife came to the door, but when she heard what he wanted, she told him to go away; her husband was not at home, and she could not receive any strangers.

"Well, I shall have to sleep outside," thought Little Claus, and the farmer's wife shut the door in his face.

Close by stood a large haystack, and between this and the house there was a little shed with a flat thatched roof.

"I can lie up there," said Little Claus, when he saw the roof; "that will be a nice bed; I hope the stork will not come down and bite my legs," for there was a real stork standing on the roof, where it had its nest.

Now, Little Claus crept up to the roof of the shed, where he lay down and made himself comfortable.

The window shutters did not close at the top, so he could see into the room. There was a large table, and the cloth was laid, and on it were wine, roast meat, and a fine fish. The farmer's wife and the sexton sat at the table, but nobody else; she was handing the food to him, and he was enjoying the fish, for this was a dish of which he was very fond.

"If only I could get some too," thought Little Claus, and he craned his neck towards the window. Oh! what a splendid cake he could see standing there—it was a real feast!

All of a sudden he heard somebody riding along the high-road towards the house; it was the farmer coming home. The farmer was a good-natured fellow, but he had one peculiarity, and that was a great horror of sextons. The mere sight of a sexton was enough to drive him frantic with rage. And that was the reason why the sexton came to pay a visit to the farmer's wife when he knew that her husband was not at home; so the good wife gave him the finest dishes she had.

When they heard the husband coming, they were greatly alarmed, and the wife asked the sexton to hide himself in a big empty chest, which was standing in a corner. So he hid himself at once, for he knew that the husband had a great horror of sextons, and that the mere sight of a sexton was enough to drive him frantic with rage.

The wife quickly put the wine and all the dainty dishes into the oven, for if the husband had seen them, he would certainly have asked what the meaning of it all was.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Little Claus on the roof, when he saw all the dishes carried away.

"Is there anybody up there?" asked the farmer, and looked up to the place where Little Claus was lying. "Why are you lying there? You had better come with me into the house."

So Little Claus told him how he had lost his way, and asked permission to stay overnight.

"Yes, certainly," said the farmer; "but we must first have something to eat."

The farmer's wife received them both in a very friendly way, spread the cloth on the long table, and gave them a large dish of porridge. The farmer was hungry, and ate with good appetite, but Little Claus could not help thinking of the fine roast meat, the fish, and the cake, which he knew were standing in the oven.

He had put his bag, containing the horsehide, under the table at his feet, for, as we know, he had brought it from home, to sell it in the town.

He did not like the porridge, so he trod on the bag, and the dry skin inside crackled quite loudly.

"Be quiet!" said Little Claus to the sack; but he trod on it again, so that it crackled much louder than before.

"Hullo! what have you in your sack?" asked the farmer.

"Oh! it is a conjurer," said Little Claus. "He says that we oughtn't to eat porridge, for he has conjured the oven full of roast meat, fish, and cake."

"What do you mean?" said the farmer, and opened the oven-door in a hurry. There he saw the fine dishes which the wife had hidden away; but he thought, of course,

that they came through the charms of the conjurer in the sack.

The woman dared not say anything, and at once put the dishes on the table; so they made a meal of the fish, the roast meat, and the cake.

Soon afterwards, Little Claus trod on the bag again, so that the hide crackled.

"What does he say now?" asked the farmer.

"He says," replied Little Claus, "that he has conjured three bottles of wine for us, and they also are standing in the oven!"

Then the wife had to take out the wine, which she had hidden, and the farmer drank, and grew merry; he would greatly like, he thought, to possess such a conjurer as Little Claus had in his sack.

"Can he also call up the Evil One himself?" said the farmer. "I should like to see him, for I am now in a merry mood."

"Oh, yes," said Little Claus; "my conjurer can do anything that I ask. Is it not so?" he asked, and trod on the sack, so that it crackled. "Do you hear him say 'Yes'? But the Evil One is very ugly to look at, so we had better not see him!"

"Oh! I am not at all afraid," said the farmer; "I wonder what he is like."

"Well, he will probably appear in the shape of a sexton."

"Ugh!" exclaimed the farmer, "that is dreadful, for I cannot bear the sight of a sexton; but never mind, as long

as I know that it is the Evil One, I shall try to put up with it; now I have courage, but don't let him come too near me!"

"Well, I will now ask my conjurer," said Little Claus, who trod on the sack, bent down, and pretended to listen.

"What does he say?"

"He says that you may go over and open the chest that is standing in the corner; you will then see the Evil One crouching down, but you must hold the lid so that he doesn't slip out."

"Will you help me to hold it?" said the farmer, and went up to the chest where his wife had hidden the real sexton, who was sitting inside terribly frightened.

The farmer opened the lid a little, and peeped into the chest.

"Ugh!" he cried, and sprang backwards. "Well, now I have seen him—he was exactly like the sexton at our church. Oh! how dreadful!"

After this they drank together, and so they sat drinking, until late into the night.

"You must sell me that conjurer," said the farmer; "you may ask me anything you like; I will give you a whole bushel of money."

"No, I cannot take it," said Little Claus; "just think how useful he is to me."

"But I should so very much like to have him," said the farmer, and he went on begging.

"Well," said Little Claus at last, "as you have been



Little Claus stopped at the bridge. (P. 296.)

so kind as to shelter me for the night, I will do as you wish. You shall have the conjurer for a bushel of money, but you must fill the bushel up to the top."

"You shall have it," said the farmer; "but as for that chest over there, you must take it away with you—I will

not have it another hour in my house. For all we can tell, he may be there still."

Little Claus gave the farmer the sack containing the dried hide, and received in return a bushel brimful of money. And the farmer gave him into the bargain a large wheelbarrow, to carry off his money and the chest.

"Good-bye!" said Little Claus; and so he went off with his money and the big chest, in which the sexton was still sitting.

On the far side of the forest was a wide and deep river; the water was running so rapidly that one could scarcely swim against the stream. They had built a fine new bridge over it.

Little Claus stopped at the bridge, and said quite loudly, so that the sexton in the chest should hear: "Now, what am I to do with this stupid chest? It is as heavy as if there were stones in it; I am getting quite tired of carrying it any farther, so I'll just throw it into the river. If it drifts down to my place, so much the better; if not, it doesn't matter." So he took hold of the chest with one hand, and lifted it a little as if he were going to throw it into the water.

"No! don't!" cried the sexton inside; "please let me out!"

"Ugh!" exclaimed Little Claus, pretending to be frightened. "So he is still inside! I had better throw it into the river, so as to drown him."

"Oh! no! no!" cried the sexton; "I will give you a whole bushel of money if you will let me go!"

"Ah! that's a different thing," said Little Claus, and opened the chest. The sexton at once crept out, pushed the empty chest into the river, and went home, where he gave Little Claus a whole bushel of money. As he had one bushel before, his wheelbarrow was now quite full of money!

"Well, I am very well paid for that horse," he said to himself, when he came home to his own place, and turned out all the money in a large heap on the floor. "How angry Big Claus will be when he learns how rich I have become through that one horse of mine. But of course I shall not tell him anything about it."

Then he sent a man to Big Claus, to borrow a bushel measure.

"What can he want with it?" thought Big Claus; and he smeared some tar on the bottom of the bushel, so that a little of whatever was measured would stick to it.

And this did indeed happen, for when the bushel came back, there were three new sixpenny-pieces at the bottom of it.

"What is this?" said Big Claus, and ran off at once to Little Claus. "Where did you get all this money from?"

"Oh! I got it for my horse's skin, which I sold last night."

"That is a very good price," said Big Claus. So he ran home, seized an axe, and killed all his four horses, took the skins off them, and drove into the town.

"Hides! hides! Who will buy hides?" he cried through the streets.

All the shoemakers and tanners came running up to him, and asked him his price.

"A bushel of money for each," said Big Claus.

"Are you mad?" they all said. "Do you think we have money by the bushel?"

"Hides! hides! Who will buy hides?" he cried again, but to all who asked what the hides would cost, he replied: "A bushel of money."

"He wants to make fools of us," they all said, and the shoemakers took their straps, and the tanners their leathern aprons, and they began to beat Big Claus.

"Hides! hides!" they jeered at him. "We will tan your hide for you, till the red broth runs out of it. Out of the town with him!" And Big Claus had to run as fast as he could, for he had never had such a thrashing before.

"Well," he said, when he came home, "Little Claus shall pay for this. I will kill him."

Now, Little Claus's old grandmother had just died. She had always been very harsh and unkind to him, but nevertheless, he was very sorry, and he took the dead woman and laid her in his own warm bed, to see if she would not come to life again. She could lie there all night, he thought, for he would sit in a corner and sleep on a chair, which he had done before.

As he was sitting there in the night, the door opened, and Big Claus came in with his axe. He knew quite well where Little Claus's bed was; so he went straight up to it, and hit the dead grandmother on the head, thinking that she was Little Claus.

"Now," he said, "you cannot make a fool of me again!" and then he went back home.



Big Claus had to run as fast as he could. (P. 298.)

"He is a bad, wicked man," said Little Claus; "he wanted to kill me. It was a good thing for my old grandmother that she was already dead, or else he would have killed her."

He then dressed the old grandmother in her Sunday clothes, borrowed a horse from his neighbour, harnessed it to a cart, and propped up the old grandmother on the back seat, so that she could not fall out when the cart moved; and so they drove through the wood.

When the sun rose, they were outside a large inn.

Here Little Claus stopped, and went in to get something to eat.

The inn-keeper had a great deal of money; he was also a good-natured fellow, but exceedingly hot-tempered, as if he had pepper and tobacco inside him.

"Good morning," he said to Little Claus. "You have your Sunday clothes on early to-day."

"Yes," said Little Claus; "I am going to town with my old grandmother. She is sitting outside in the cart. I cannot get her to come inside, so will you please take a glass of beer out to her? But you must speak very loudly, because she is a little hard of hearing."

"All right," said the inn-keeper. So he poured out a large glass of beer, and with this he went out to the dead grandmother, who was sitting up in the cart.

"Here is a glass of beer from your grandson," said the inn-keeper; but the dead old woman said not a word, and sat quite still.

"Don't you hear?" cried the inn-keeper, as loudly as

he could; "here is a glass of beer from your grandson!" Once more he shouted, and yet again, but as the grandmother did not even move on the seat, he at last got angry, and threw the glass right in her face, so that the beer ran down over her nose, and she fell back into the cart, for she had only been propped up, and not fastened.

"Hullo!" cried Little Claus, running out at the door; and he seized hold of the inn-keeper. "You have killed my grandmother! See, there is a big wound on her forehead!"

"Oh! this is indeed a misfortune!" cried the host, wringing his hands; "it all comes of my hot temper. Dear Little Claus, I will give you a whole bushel of money, and have your grandmother buried as if she were my own, if only you will say nothing about it; or I shall have my head cut off, and that would be too dreadful!"

So Little Claus received a bushel of money, and the inn-keeper buried the old grandmother as if she had been his own.

When Little Claus came home again with this heap of money, he at once sent a man over to Big Claus, to ask him if he could lend him a bushel measure.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Big Claus; "I thought I had killed him! I must really see to this myself." So he went over to Little Claus with the bushel. "Where did you get all this money from?" he asked, opening his eyes wide, when he saw all the new money that had arrived.

"It was my grandmother, and not me, that you killed," said Little Claus; "now I have sold her, and got a bushel of money for her."

"That was a very good price," said Big Claus; and hurried back home, took his axe, and killed his own grandmother, put her in a cart, drove to town, where the druggist lived, and asked him if he would like to buy a dead person.

"Who is he, and where did you get him from?" asked the druggist.

"It is my grandmother," said Big Claus; "I have killed her to get a bushel of money for her."

"Heaven save us!" said the druggist; "you are raving! But don't talk such nonsense, or you may lose your head," and he told him earnestly what a wicked deed he had done, what a wicked man he was, and that he ought to be punished; so that Big Claus got so frightened that he ran straight out of the druggist's, sprang into his cart, whipped up the horses, and drove home.

But the druggist and all the people thought he was mad, and let him drive wherever he liked.

"I shall pay you for this!" said Big Claus, as he drove along the road; "I shall pay you for this, Little Claus!" As soon as he came home, he took the biggest sack he could find, went over to Little Claus, and said: "Now you have fooled me once more! First I killed my horses, and then my old grandmother; it is all your fault, but you shall never play a trick on me again," and he seized Little Claus round the waist, put him in the sack, lifted it on to his back, and said: "Now I am going to drown you!"

It was a good long way before they came to the river, and Little Claus was not very light to carry. The road led

past the church; the organ was playing, and the people were singing beautifully; so Big Claus put down the sack, with Little Claus in it, by the church door, and thought it might be as well for him to go inside and hear a psalm before he went farther. Little Claus would not be able to get out, and all the people were at church, so in he went.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Little Claus inside the sack, and he twisted, and turned, but it was impossible for him to undo the string.

Just then there came along an old drover with snow-white hair, carrying a big stick in his hand. He was driving a whole herd of oxen; and they ran up against the sack in which Little Claus was sitting, and overturned it.

"Oh, dear," sighed Little Claus; "I am so very young, to be going to Heaven."

"And I, poor thing," said the ox-driver, "I am so old, and have not got there yet."

"Open the sack," cried Little Claus, "and creep into it in my place; you will then go to Heaven at once."

"Well, I should very much like to, indeed," said the drover, and opened the sack for Little Claus, who at once jumped out.

"Please to take care of the cattle," said the old man, and crept into the sack, which Little Claus tied up.

Then he went off with all the cows and oxen.

A little while afterwards, Big Claus came out of the church, and threw the sack again over his shoulder. It seemed to him that it had become much lighter, which was only natural, for the old drover was only half as heavy as Little Claus.

"How light he seems now: that must be because I have heard a psalm." So he went to the river, which was deep and wide, threw the sack with the old drover into the water, and called out after him, believing, of course, that he was Little Claus: "Now you cannot play me any more tricks!"

Then he went towards home, but when he came to the crossing of the roads, he met Little Claus, who was driving the cattle.

"What is this?" cried Big Claus; "have I not drowned you?"

"Yes," said Little Claus; "you threw me into the river half an hour ago."

"But where did you get all these fine cattle from?" asked Big Claus.

"They are sea-cattle," said Little Claus. "I will tell you the whole story; but first I thank you very much for having drowned me, for now that I have come up again, I am quite rich. I was very much frightened when I lay in the sack, and the wind whistled about my ears when you threw me down from the bridge into the cold water. I sank at once to the bottom, but I did not hurt myself, for down there grows the most beautiful soft grass. I fell on this, and at once the sack opened: a beautiful maiden in a shining white robe, and with a green wreath on her wet hair, took me by the hand, and said: 'Is that you, Little Claus? Here you have some cattle to begin with, and a mile farther up the road is another herd, which I will give you.' Now, I found out that the river was the high-road for the sea-folk. On the bed of the stream they can walk and drive all the

way from the sea, straight into the land, as far as the river-source. It is very pretty down there, with flowers and the freshest grass; the fish that were swimming in the water darted past me just like the birds in the air. The people are charming, and what beautiful cattle are there, grazing by the roadside and in the pastures!"

"But why did you come back here so soon?" asked Big Claus. "I would not have done that if it was so beautiful down there."

"Oh!" said Little Claus; "I was very artful about that. You remember, as I said, the mermaid told me that a mile up the road—and by the road she means the river, for she does not know of anything else—there was a whole herd of cattle for me. But, of course, the river makes several bends, now here, now there—it is a long way round, and if you can make the way shorter it is all the better; that is why I've come up on land, for by crossing over from one bend of the river to the other, I save nearly half a mile, and reach my sea-cattle all the sooner!"

"Oh, you are a lucky fellow," said Big Claus. "Do you think that I could get sea-cattle, too, if I went down to the bottom of the river?"

"Well, I should think so," said Little Claus; "but I cannot carry you in the sack, for you are too heavy. You must go down there yourself, and creep into the sack; then I will throw you in, with the greatest pleasure."

"Thank you very much," said Big Claus; "but if I do not get any sea-cattle when I get down there, I shall give you a thrashing—of that you may be sure!"

"Oh, no; don't be so cruel!" said Little Claus; and so they went down to the river.

When the cattle, which were thirsty, saw the river, they ran as fast as they could to the water to drink.

"See how they hurry!" said Little Claus; "they long to get down to the bottom of the river again."

"Yes, but help me first," said Big Claus, "or I will thrash you;" and he crept into a big sack which had been lying on the back of one of the oxen. "Put a stone in, or else I fear I may not sink," said Big Claus.

"All right," said Little Claus, and he put a big stone in the sack, tied the string tightly, and pushed him over.

Splash! went Big Claus into the river, and sank at once to the bottom.

"I am afraid he will never find the cattle," said Little Claus; and then he drove home with his own herd.

THE SNOW MAN.

"I AM positively crackling, it is so beautifully cold," said the Snow Man. "The wind is enough to blow life into one, and how the shining one up there is staring at me!" He meant the sun, which was just setting. "It shall not make me wink: I will keep my eyes wide open."

His eyes were made of two large triangular pieces of tile; his mouth was a part of an old rake, and he was therefore provided with teeth.

He had been born amidst the cheers of the boys, and welcomed by the sound of sleigh-bells and the cracking of whips.

The sun set; the full moon rose, round and large, clear and beautiful, in the blue sky.

"There it is again on the other side," said the Snow Man. He thought it was the sun, that had appeared once more. "I have cured it of staring! Now it may hang up there and shine so that I can see myself. If only I knew how to move! I should like to get down on to the ice and slide, as I have seen the boys do, but I don't quite know how to run."

"Bow! wow!" barked the old Yard Dog. He was a

little hoarse; he had been hoarse, in fact, ever since he was an indoor dog and lay under the stove. "The sun will soon teach you to run! It taught your predecessor to run last year, and his predecessor too. Bow! wow! they are both gone."

"I don't understand what you mean, fellow!" said the Snow Man. "Is that thing yonder going to teach me to run?" He meant the moon. "Well, it ran away itself just now, when I was staring at it, and now it is creeping up from the other side."

"You don't know anything," said the Yard Dog; "but then you have only lately been built up. The one you can see now is called the moon; the one that just went down is the sun, and it is coming back again to-morrow, and will teach you to run down into the moat. The weather is about to change; I can feel it in my left hind leg, which is aching. Yes, the weather is undoubtedly going to change."

"I don't understand him," said the Snow Man, "but I have a foreboding that what he is saying is very disagreeable. The one which he calls the sun, that was staring at me, and that disappeared, is no friend of mine either, I am sure of that."

"Bow! wow!" barked the Yard Dog, as he walked three times round himself and then lay down in his kennel to sleep.

There came, in fact, a change in the weather. Towards morning a thick damp fog covered the whole country around. At dawn a breeze sprang up; the wind was cold as ice, and the frost got a strong grip of the earth.

What a sight it was to see the sun rise! All the trees

and bushes were white with hoar-frost; it looked like a whole forest of white coral, all the branches covered with glittering white blossoms. The multitude of fine twigs which are hidden in summer by the leaves could now be seen quite distinctly; they formed a lacework so brilliant that it seemed as if a dazzling light were radiating from every branch. The birch waving in the wind was as full of life as the trees in the summer-time.

It was incomparably beautiful! and when the sun shone, the whole scene glittered as if it were powdered all over with diamond dust. It seemed as if great diamonds were sparkling on the snowy carpet, or that countless little lights were burning, far whiter than the white snow itself.

"It is wonderfully beautiful," said the young girl, who came with a young man into the garden. They stood just beside the Snow Man and admired the brilliant landscape. "Even the summer can show no prettier sight," she said, her eyes sparkling.

"Nor can it show such a fellow as that," said her companion, pointing to the Snow Man. "He is capital!"

The young girl smiled, nodded to the Snow Man, and danced along with her friend over the snow, that crackled as if they were walking on starch.

"Who were those two?" asked the Snow Man of the Yard Dog; "you are an older resident than I am—do you know them?"

"Of course I do," said the Yard Dog. "She has patted me, and he has given me a bone; I am not going to bite *them*."



They stood just beside the Snow Man. (P. 310.)

"But what are they?" asked the Snow Man.

"They are lovers," replied the Yard Dog. "They are going to move into the same kennel and gnaw bones together. Bow! wow!"

"Are these two as important as you and I?" asked the Snow Man.

"Why, they live in the house!" said the Yard Dog. "Those who were only born yesterday have certainly a deal to learn. I notice that in you; *I* have age and knowledge: I know all of them here in the house. There was a time when I did not stand here in the cold, fastened to a chain. Bow! wow!"

"The cold is delightful," said the Snow Man. "Do

tell me about it; but you must not clank with your chain, for it jars right through me."

"Bow! wow!" barked the Yard Dog. "I was a puppy once—a pretty little thing, they said. I used to lie in the house on a chair covered with velvet, or in the lap of the mistress. I was kissed on the nose, my paws were wiped with an embroidered handkerchief, and they used to call me a 'dear, sweet, little pet.' But after a time I grew too big for them, so they gave me to the housekeeper.

"I went to live in the basement; from where you stand, you can look into the room where I was master, for I was quite the master at the housekeeper's. It was certainly a poorer place than upstairs, but it was much more pleasant; for at least, I was no longer squeezed and pulled about by the children. I had just as good food as before, and much more of it: I had my own cushion, and there was a stove; and at this time of the year that is the finest thing in the world. I used to creep in under the stove so that nobody could see me. Ah! I still dream of that stove! Bow! wow!"

"Does a stove look so very nice?" asked the Snow Man; "is it anything like me?"

"It is just the reverse of you," said the Yard Dog; "it is coal-black, and has a long neck, and a brass top. It eats firewood so that the fire spurts out of its mouth. If you nestle beside it, or close under it, it is most comfortable. You can surely see it through the window from where you stand."

The Snow Man looked, and saw a black, polished

thing with a brass top. The fire shone out from the lower part. The Snow Man felt quite strange; it was a sensation that he could not explain, a kind of feeling that he did not understand, but which all people who are not snow men can appreciate.

"Then why did you leave her?" said the Snow Man; he felt that it must have been one of the gentler sex. "What caused you to give up such a place?"

"I was obliged to," replied the Yard Dog; "they pushed me outside and chained me up here. I had bitten the youngest son in the leg, because he kicked away the bone I was gnawing. 'Bone for bone,' I thought, but *they* took it differently; and since then I have been chained up, and my voice has lost its quality; listen how hoarse I am—bow! wow!—and that was the end of it."

The Snow Man was not listening: he was looking steadily down into the housekeeper's basement—into the room where the stove was standing on its four iron legs; it appeared to be about as large as the Snow Man himself.

"I am crackling quite strangely," said he; "shall I ever get in there? It is a harmless wish, and our harmless wishes are most likely to be fulfilled. It is my dearest wish, my only wish, and it would be very wrong if it was not fulfilled! I must get in there, I must lean against her, even if I have to break the window."

"You will never get in there," said the Yard Dog, "and even if you got in you would soon disappear. Bow! wow!"

"I am as good as gone," said the Snow Man; "I think I am breaking up."

The whole day the Snow Man stood looking through the window, and at dusk the room appeared still more inviting. From the stove came a gentle glow, not like moonshine, or sunshine—no: such a light as gleams only from a stove that has something inside.

Whenever the door was opened the flames darted out—this was a way the stove had—and threw a bright light upon the Snow Man's white face, and upon his body.

"I can stand it no longer," he said; "how beautiful she looks when she puts out her tongue!"

The night was very long, but it did not appear so to the Snow Man; for he stood lost in his own charming reflections, and they were freezing so that he actually crackled.

In the morning the window-panes of the basement were frozen—covered with ice-flowers as beautiful as any Snow Man could desire; but they quite concealed the stove, for the window-panes would not thaw.

The Snow Man could not see the stove; it crackled and jarred within him; indeed, it was just the kind of frosty weather that a Snow Man should enjoy, but he did not enjoy it. He ought to have felt quite happy, but he was not happy at all—he was "*stove sick*."

"That is a terrible disease for a Snow Man," said the Yard Dog; "I also have suffered from that complaint, but I have now recovered. Bow! wow! we shall have a change in the weather."

And the weather did change; it began to thaw, the

air became warmer, and the Snow Man decreased in size. He said nothing, he did not complain, and that is a sure sign.

One morning he tumbled over.



There was the handle of a broom where the Snow Man had been standing.
(P. 315.)

There was something like the handle of a broom sticking up from where he had been standing, round which the children had built him up.

"Ah, now I understand his great longing for the stove," said the Yard Dog; "the Snow Man has had a stove-

rake in his body, and that is what caused his emotion; but now it is all over—bow! wow!”

And soon the winter was over as well.

“Bow! wow!” barked the Yard Dog; but the little girls in the house sang:—

“Shoot forth, you fresh and fragrant thyme,
Show, willow-tree, your woollen glove,
Come, cuckoo, lark, and gentle dove,
For we are now in sweet spring-time.
Shine, kindly sun, while I sing to you,
And echo answers: ‘Cuckoo! cuckoo!’”

And nobody thought of the Snow Man.

THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA.

THERE was once a Prince who wanted to marry a Princess; but she must be a *real* Princess. So he travelled round the world to find one, but there was always some difficulty. There were plenty of Princesses, if only he could have been quite certain that they were real Princesses; there was always something that did not seem quite right. And so he came home again, in a very sorrowful mood, for he greatly wished to marry a real Princess.

One evening, a terrible storm occurred. There was thunder and lightning, and the rain poured in torrents; it was indeed a terrible storm. There came a knock at the town gate, and the old King went out to open it.

Outside stood a Princess!

But alas! how roughly the storm had treated her! The water streamed down from her hair and clothes, and ran in through the tips of her shoes and out through the heels; but she said that she was a real Princess.

"Well, we shall soon be able to find out," thought the old Queen. She did not say anything, but went into the bedroom, took all the bedding out of the bed, and put a parched pea at the bottom; then she put twenty mattresses on the top of the pea, and twenty eider-down quilts on top of the mattresses. And the Princess was to sleep there that night.

In the morning they asked her how she had slept.

"Oh! very badly indeed," said the Princess; "I have scarcely been able to shut my eyes the whole night! Goodness knows what there was in the bed! I have been lying on something hard, so that I am black and blue all over; it is quite dreadful!"

Now they were certain that she was a real Princess, for she had felt the pea through twenty mattresses and twenty eider-down quilts; no one but a real Princess could be so delicate. So the Prince took her for his wife, for he knew that at last he had found a real Princess. And the pea was put in the Art Museum; and there it is now, if nobody has taken it away.

This is a true story.



THE DAISY.

NOW you shall hear! Out in the country, close by the roadside, lay a villa residence; you must have seen it once yourself.

In front of it was a little garden, with flowers, and a fence, which was painted. Close by, in the ditch, in the midst of the most beautiful green grass, grew a little Daisy. The sun shone just as warmly and brightly upon it as upon the grandest flowers in the garden; and so it grew from hour to hour. One morning it stood in full bloom, with its tiny, bright, shining petals, like rays round the little yellow sun in the middle. It did not occur to the Daisy that nobody would see it there in the grass, and that it was a poor despised wildflower; no, it was very merry, and turned towards the warm sun, looked up at it, and listened to the Lark singing in the sky.

The little Daisy was as happy as if the day had been a holiday, and yet it was only Monday. All the children were at school; and while they were sitting on their benches, learning, the Daisy sat on its little green stalk and learned also, from the warm sun, and from everything around, how good God is. It seemed to the Daisy that the things which

it could only dumbly feel were sung so clearly and prettily by the little Lark, that it looked up with a kind of respect to the happy bird, who could both sing and fly. The Daisy did not repine, however, that it could do neither of these things.

"I can see and hear it," thought the Daisy; "the sun shines upon me, and the wind kisses me. Oh! how richly have I been endowed!"

Inside the fence stood many stiff, aristocratic flowers; the less scent they had the more conceited they were. The peonies blew themselves out so as to look larger than the roses, but mere size is not sufficient! The tulips possessed the most beautiful colours, and they were well aware of this, holding themselves bolt upright so as to attract attention. They did not notice the little Daisy outside, but the Daisy looked at them all the more, and thought how rich and beautiful they were.

"That beautiful bird must often come to visit them," thought the Daisy. "I am very glad that I am so near them, for then I can enjoy the sight of their splendour!" And at the very moment when this thought occurred to it—"Tweet!" down flew the Lark, but not to the peonies and tulips; no, down into the grass to the poor little Daisy, which was so much overjoyed that it could scarcely collect its thoughts.

The little bird was hopping around it, and singing: "Oh! how soft the grass is! and see, what a sweet little flower, with gold in its heart and silver on its dress."

The little yellow centre in the daisy looked like gold,

and the small petals around it were shining white. No one could imagine how happy the little Daisy was! The Lark kissed it with its beak, sang for it, and flew up again into the blue sky. It was at least a quarter of an hour before the little flower could recover itself. Quite modestly, but with joy in its heart, it looked at the flowers in the garden; they had seen the honour and happiness that had been bestowed upon it: they would understand its joy. But the tulips were standing just as stiff as before; they were quite sharp in the face, and very red, for they were angry. The peonies were very stupid, and it was a good thing that they were unable to speak, for they would have given the Daisy a good scolding. The poor little flower could see that they were not in a good humour, and it felt quite pained.

Just then, a young girl came into the garden, with a sharp and glittering knife. She went straight up to the tulips, and cut off one after the other.

"Oh," sighed the little Daisy, "this is dreadful; now it is all over with them!"

And when the young girl went away with the tulips, the Daisy was glad that it grew out in the grass, and was only a poor little wildflower. It felt very thankful; and when the sun went down it folded its little petals, fell asleep, and dreamed the whole night long of the sun and the little birds.

The next morning, when the little flower again stretched out its tiny white petals, like little arms, towards the air and light, it recognised the Lark's voice, but its song was very sad. The poor little thing had good reason to be mournful,

for it had been caught, and now it sat in a cage close by the open window. It sang of the joy of free, unfettered flight, sang of the young green corn in the fields, and of the beautiful journeys it used to make on its wings high up in the air. The little bird was sad at heart, as it sat there, a prisoner in its cage.

The little Daisy greatly wished to help it. But what could it do?—that was a difficult question. It forgot how pretty everything was, how warmly the sun shone, how beautiful were its own white petals. Ah! it could only think of the poor imprisoned bird, which it was unable to help.

Just then, two little boys came out of the garden, one of them carrying a knife as big and sharp as that with which the girl had cut off the tulips.

They went straight up to the little Daisy, which could not make out what they wanted.

"Here we can get a beautiful piece of turf for the Lark," said one of the boys, and began to cut a square round the Daisy, leaving it standing in the middle.

"Tear off the flower," said the other boy; and the Daisy trembled with fear, for to be torn off was to lose its life, and *now* it wanted particularly to live, as it was to be put with the piece of turf in the cage of the imprisoned Lark.

"No, let it remain," said the other boy, "it looks so pretty;" so it was not disturbed, but was put into the Lark's cage. But the poor bird complained loudly over its loss of liberty, and flapped its wings against the wires.

The little Daisy could not speak, nor say a word of

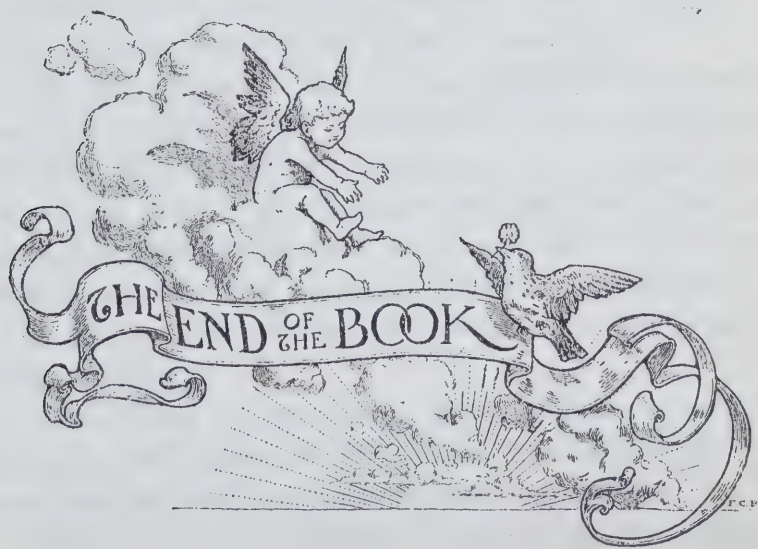
fold its petals together and sleep; it drooped, ill and full of sorrow, to the earth.

Not until the next morning did the boys come; and when they found that the little bird was dead, they shed many tears, and dug it a pretty little grave, which they adorned with flower petals. They put the dead bird in a beautiful box, for it was to have a royal funeral, poor thing!

While it lived and sang they forgot it—shut it in a cage and allowed it to die of want; now it received great honour and the tribute of many tears.

But the piece of turf grass with the Daisy was thrown out on to the dusty road.

No one thought of it, although it had felt more sorrow than any for the little bird, and had so greatly wished to comfort it.



comfort, though it would greatly have liked to; and thus the whole morning passed.

"There is no water here!" said the captive Lark; "they have all gone out and forgotten to give me anything to drink! My throat is dry and burning; it is like fire and ice within me, and the air is so heavy! Oh! I must die—leave the warm sunshine, the fresh green fields, and all the beautiful things that God has created!"

And it thrust its little beak down into the cool turf to refresh itself. Then its eyes fell on the Daisy, and the bird nodded to it, and kissed it with its beak, and said—

"You also must wither here, poor little wildflower! You, and the little piece of grass turf, are all they have given me, instead of the whole world which was mine out there! Every little blade of grass shall be to me a green tree, every one of your white petals a fragrant flower. Ah! how keenly you remind me of all I have lost!"

"If only I could comfort him," thought the Daisy; but it could not move a leaf, although the scent that streamed forth from its delicate leaves was now far stronger than is usual in the daisy. The bird noticed this, and, although it was fainting with thirst, and in its pain tore off the green blades of grass, it did not touch the little wildflower.

Evening came, and no one brought the poor little bird a drop of water.

It stretched out its pretty delicate wings, its song became a mournful chirp, its little head bent towards the wildflower, and its heart broke with want and grief.

The little Daisy could not, as on the previous evening,

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ANDERSEN H. C. HANS CHRISTIAN
1805-1875

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